THE FUTURE OF AMIGA COMPUTING

AMIGACTIVE

ISSUE 22 JULY 2001



SUMMER MADNESS!

- (22) Sound FX
- (28) WinUAE JIT
- (42) OS3.9 Masterclass
- (38) Photogenics Masterclass
- (50) Shogo: Mobile Armor Division

...end transmission

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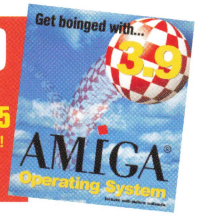
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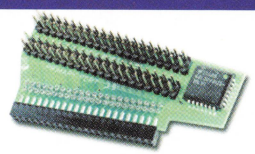
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Power Flyer A4000/A3000 Gold £69.95

EIDE 99 A1200 £24.95



Mediator PCI 1200 £139.95

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Not one, not two, but three PCI implementations, now!

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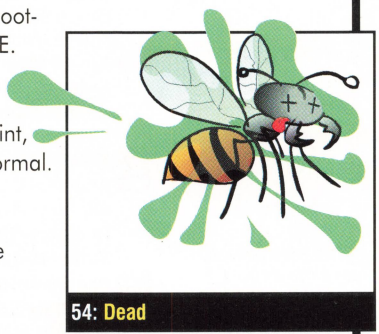
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The AmigaOne beginning to feature prominently.

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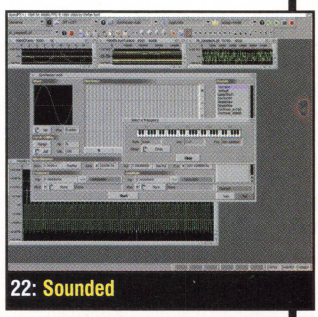
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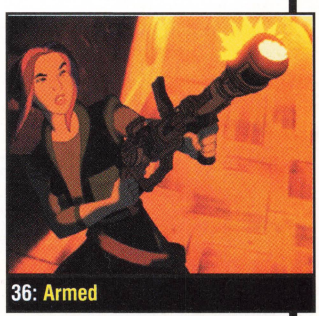
30 NextGen Watch
Half a gigabyte of storage on a disc no bigger than a coin? Maybe it's true: the best things really do come in small packages.

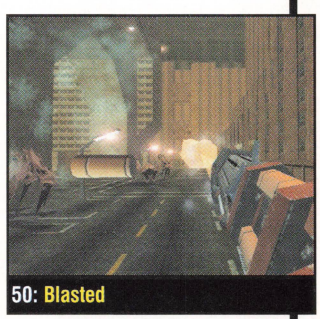
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We're on a role this month. It's bootiful, it really is.

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You're a tad upset. Well, you would be, wouldn't you!


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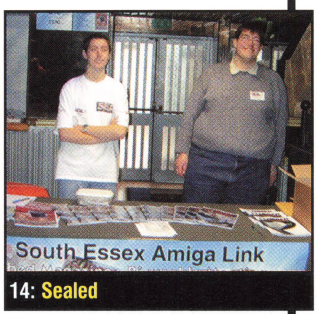
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Amiga user groups are playing an increasingly important role in the community these days. But what goes on in the shadowy underworld of user groups? We explore and discover.

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The second part of our Bluffer's Guide to the Future takes in terms from Memory Protection to Zaurus, exploring some pretty wacky concepts along the way.

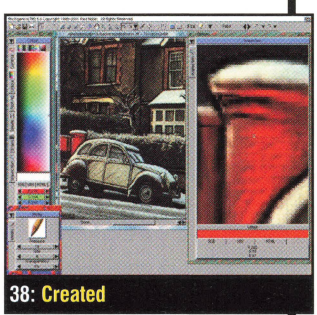
27 Mini Masterclass
Multi-session CDs - how and why? Well, it's easy if you know how; but not very easy if you don't. Makes sense, doesn't it? We show you how to burn those discs properly.

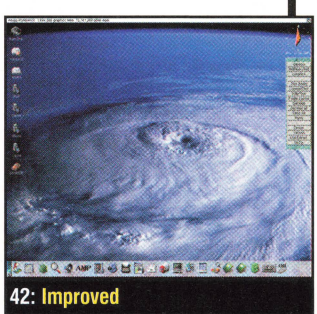
38 Photogenics
In the first part of a new Masterclass, we look at combining drawn and photographic elements into a single image.

42 OS3.9
We give you some further tips on improving the look of your Workbench for the Summer, and show you how easy it is to wire yourself up to the world.



14: Sealed


38: Created


42: Improved



AACD 22

Sound FX
Read the review and try out the software. We have a demo of the latest version of this sound processing software on this month's coverdisc to complement the review on page 22.



TaskiSMS
Send SMS messages directly from your Amiga, without needing to load up a web browser and wait for countless adverts to load.

Amiga Games Database
A comprehensive listing of over 800 Amiga games, with reviews and other information.

Heretic II
Abode of Golgotha 2 is a Heretic II add on. This is a more comprehensive sequel to the first version featured on AACD20.

Works with all Amiga CDROM drives.
Now that the Linux series has ended, our CDs no longer use multi-session mastering and are readable by any Amiga CD, even a CDTV. This was true of the last coverdisc too, but it's worth mentioning again just to make sure you're all aware...

Resources
This drawer is on every AACD and contains a range of essential programs. If you get stuck, or you need to start again after a hard drive problem, this is the place to look.

...and there's more...
We cannot cover over 650MB in a couple of hundred words, so put the CD in your Amiga, double-click the Welcome icon and start exploring for yourself.

As always, our easy-to-use Search program will help if you're looking for something in particular.

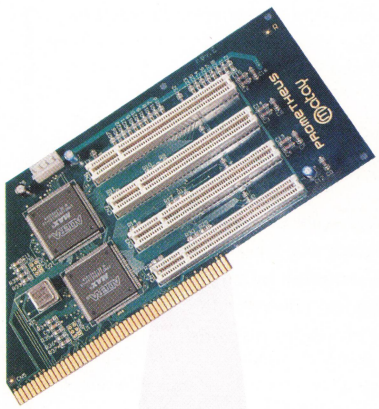


ACTIVE News

Amiga Active brings you the latest news from the Amiga industry. news@amigactive.com

PCI War Hots Up

Amiga PCI busboard market saturated with new models. Driver situation begins to clear...



The Prometheus PCI busboard (pictured, left) for Zorro III equipped Amigas will be available by the time this issue of *Amiga Active* hits the shelves. The new board is the Amiga's third PCI solution, but the first for Zorro III Amigas, which include the A3000 and A4000. Simultaneously, Elbox have announced the availability of their new Mediator models for A4000s and A3000s.

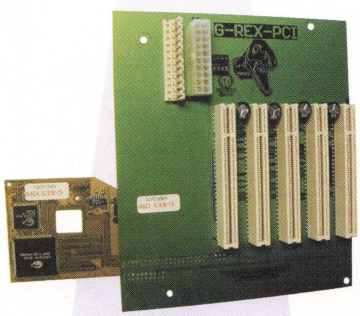
The Prometheus, made by Matay in Poland, allows so-called 'big box' Amigas to gain four PCI slots from a single Zorro III slot. The board will be shipped with 2D and 3D drivers for the Voodoo3 line of graphics cards, which is also supported on the Mediator 1200 and G-Rex PCI cards. Ethernet and sound card drivers are also available for the Prometheus, along with a royalty-free SDK (Software Developers Kit) to encourage the development of additional third party PCI card drivers.

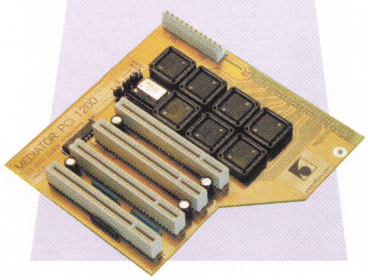
Guaranteed for five years, the Prometheus is the first PCI expansion board to win Hyperion's 'seal of approval' for its 3D support. Like other PCI solutions, a PowerPC card for the Prometheus is apparently in the pipeline.

New Mediators

Following Elbox's announcement of new Mediator models at the end of May, new hardware is yet to reach the *Amiga Active* offices, but we expect to have something in time to review in our next issue.

Three new models of the Mediator have been developed by Elbox: the Mediator PCI 4000, Mediator PCI ZIII and Mediator PCI ZIV. The Mediator PCI 4000 is targeted at A4000 tower systems in Power Tower cases and can only be installed in Elbox's Zorro III busboard. The most advanced Mediator available, it allows the use of up to six Zorro III cards





New Mediators - Specifications

Mediator PCI 4000
RRP 169.95 Euros (ex. VAT)

- 5 PCI (2.1 compatible) slots.
- 66 MHz PCI clock.
- Transfer between PCI cards up to 264 MB/s.
- Busmastering controller supporting transfers between PCI cards.
- Busmastering controller supporting transfers between PCI cards and the A4000 motherboard, between PCI cards and the A4000 turbo card memory (DMA), and between PCI cards and Zorro III cards.
- Interrupt controller supporting four interrupt lines.
- Enables simultaneous operation of Zorro III/II cards.
- Works with all the turbo card models for A4000 computers.
- Ready for installation of the SharkPPC G3/G4 and SharkPPC+ G3/G4 cards.
- Supports autoconfig Zorro III.
- Up to 1GB continuous PCI memory space.

Mediator PCI ZIV
RRP 189.95 Euros (ex. VAT)

As Mediator PCI 4000, minus busmastering between Mediator and A4000 (obviously), and except for:

- 4 PCI (2.1 compatible) slots.
- Enables simultaneous operation of Zorro II cards installed in the Zorro IV busboard.
- Enables simultaneous operation of devices

simultaneously with up to five PCI cards.

The Mediator PCI ZIII, meanwhile, is intended for use in all Zorro III-equipped Amigas (A4000, A4000T, A3000, A1200 with a Zorro III busboard). Last but not least, the Mediator PCI ZIV has been designed solely for use in towered A1200s equipped with a ZIV busboard, and plugs into one of the two ZIV slots on the ZIV busboard.

Elbox have developed their own drivers for the Mediator line of PCI busboards to support the following PCI cards:

Graphics cards: Voodoo5 5500 64MB, Voodoo4 4500 32MB, Voodoo3 3000 16MB, Voodoo3 2000 16MB, Voodoo Banshee 16MB, S3 ViRGE 86C325 2MB, S3 ViRGE 86C325 4MB, S3 ViRGE/DX 86C375 2MB, S3 ViRGE/DX 86C375 4MB.

Ethernet cards: Winbond 89C940F, RealTek RTL-8029, NetVin NV5000S.C., Holtek HT80232, Holtek HT80229, Compex RL2000, SureCom NE34, KTI ET32P2, Via 86C926.

connected to the Clock Ports in the ZIV busboard.
- Works with all the turbo card models for A1200 computers.

Mediator PCI ZIII
RRP 169.95 Euros (ex. VAT)

As Mediator PCI 4000, except:

- 4 PCI slots (PCI 2.1 compatible).
- Up to 512MB continuous PCI memory space.

www.elbox.com

Warp3D - a fee, not for free

Warp3D, the Amiga's only 3D graphics system, is no longer being offered as a freeware product due to the amount of work that has gone into the package's development. Instead, Warp3D v4 is now being offered as a commercial OEM product to hardware manufacturers for a lump sum license fee.

Matay, manufacturers of the Prometheus PCI busboard, are the first to sign a written agreement with Hyperion for Voodoo3 drivers, whilst an oral agreement has been made with German manufacturers of the G-Rex PCI busboard, DCE, who have publicly acknowledged their willingness to acquire an OEM license. Talks between Hyperion and Elbox to include Warp3D drivers with the Mediator product line are still ongoing, but are expected to be concluded shortly.

As a result of these talks, Matay are the first company to be officially granted an OEM license for Warp3D graphics drivers. The Prometheus also comes with official Picasso96 drivers (unlike Elbox's unofficially developed P96 drivers) and will be used by developers of AmigaOS 4.0 to develop AmiRTG, the AmigaDE's retargetable graphics system for cards which will include the Matrox G450.

Meanwhile, work on the Warp3D driver for Voodoo3 continues. Thomas Frieden, one of Warp3D's developers, told *Amiga Active*; *"the speed in 640x480 is about the same as the Permedia 2 in 320x240, which means that our games are perfectly playable in higher resolutions."* Encouraging news, indeed. A release shouldn't be far off now.

Editorial

If you're not moving forward...

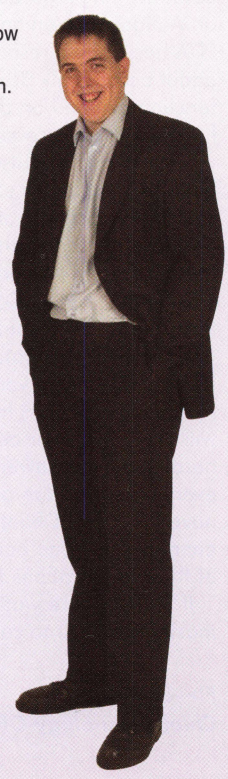
I know the Editorial is one of the first things you should read when opening a shiny new edition of *Amiga Active*, but if you haven't yet read Amiga's column, please turn the page before going any further and come back once you've heard from Fleecy.

Okay, do you like what you hear about the AmigaDE giving you access to your Amiga applications and other data on any device? Of course you do. It is only natural, however, after so many years of using our classic Amiga systems and not knowing when to expect new hardware, to question Amiga's direction now that they're moving into new markets. Questioning is good - and here at *Amiga Active*, we'll be doing our best to bring you the answers and help you to make your own minds up about Amiga's chances. In order to do this, we'll need to broaden our horizons, just as you will. We can't keep *Amiga Active* going as an exclusively 'Classic Amiga' magazine forever - at least, not on a commercial level - and I think we've done pretty well to survive and find things to write about these past 22 months as it is.

In the past, we've had to make a simple choice - cut pages or add content. On the basis that you're paying good money for your monthly fix of professionally-produced Amiga content, we chose the latter option and adopted a more flexible format, which meant we could run more features and tutorials when reviews were thin on the ground, and we've added sections like NextGen Watch to the *Amiga Active* mix. As a result, we've only dropped eight pages since our first issue, which included over 16 pages of ads. Flicking through the magazine you're holding now should be enough to convince you that we've done pretty well not to drop any more since then.

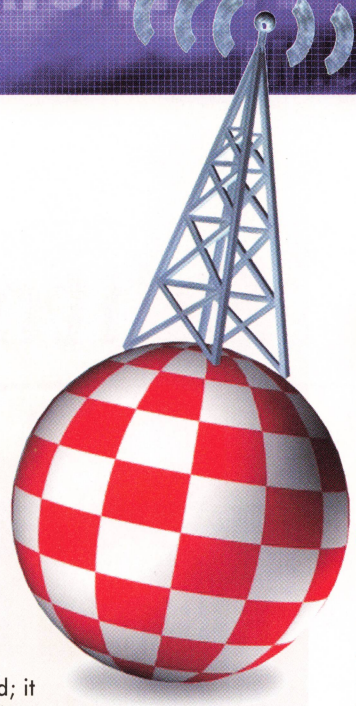
Amiga Active will continue to re-invent itself, starting with a dedicated section for 'next generation' Amiga-related technology in the near future. By doing this, we hope to reverse the advertising situation, pay our writers what they deserve and give you what you deserve for sticking with the Amiga for so long. Perhaps some of you will feel that we are giving up pages of "genuine" classic Amiga content in favour of something that isn't "truly Amiga". We're not - we're both reflecting the change that is happening in the world around us, and doing our best to ensure that it is properly Amiga flavoured by bringing you lot along on the crest of the wave.

Are you with us? Whatever your opinion, please write in to the usual address (see p54). *Amiga Active* can't stay Active without you.



David Stroud, Editor.

Amiga Anywhere



To AmigaDE or not to AmigaDE? That seems to be the question in the minds of many Amigans these days: Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous Snoqualmie or to take arms against a sea of betrayal, and by opposing, end them?

Amiga's mission has never changed; it has always been to empower the ordinary person so that they can take part in the digital revolution, to give them the tools, the environment, the ability to step into that digital life and enjoy it.

That environment is the AmigaDE. Intuition and Workbench provide the user environment for AmigaOS 3.x - icons, drawers, screens, applications, data - and it does a great job; but only on an Amiga. Truth be told, most people couldn't care what device is in front of them, and don't understand why they can't have their environment, their content whenever and wherever they want it. They paid for it after all. It feels like a conspiracy to tie them to certain devices - which is precisely what it is.

"...an embarrassment of riches..."

The purpose of the AmigaDE is to smash that conspiracy. It is a universal content environment in the same way that the Internet is a universal information environment. It can go anywhere, offer anything. Think of the AmigaDE as providing Intuition, Workbench and all of your Amiga applications and data in a single product that you can use on any device, not just an Amiga. The AmigaDE is clever enough to understand that a PDA has far less resources than a desktop machine, and will adapt accordingly. This means that on a PDA, it can provide PDA functionality and on a desktop it can provide desktop functionality. No compromises.

Since it can bind itself to any host, the better the host, the better the AmigaDE experience for the user. Amiga doesn't control the majority of the hosts (Windows, Linux, Mac etc.), and on those platforms, the AmigaDE can only ever be as good as the host itself. The fact that we all use Amigas shouts loudly that we think the Amiga OS is a better product than the other potential hosts, so by developing it further, the world gets a better desktop and workstation OS and the AmigaDE gets to show off its true power and versatility on a host that Amiga itself controls.

Amigans are thus in for an embarrassment of riches. Not only will they have their beloved OS on new, state of the art hardware, with powerful new features that will be the envy of every other desktop and workstation owner, but they will also have the AmigaDE integrated into it, giving them the twin benefits of a huge body of new applications and the portability of those applications to other devices.

If Shakespeare was still alive, he'd probably write another masterpiece just to celebrate.

Fleecy Moss,
Chief Technology Officer Amiga Inc.

JavaOne

Show Report

One small step for Java. One giant leap for the AmigaDE?

This year's JavaOne show took place in San Francisco's Moscone Center at the beginning of June. Given both Tao Group and Sharp's presence at this year's event with Amiga-powered products, including the Zaurus PDA, we felt it our duty to attend.

Hundreds of companies who were developing server, database and programming solutions around the Java 2 Enterprise Edition (J2EE) were in attendance, as the focus of JavaOne was mainly on the development side of Sun's programming language. Sun themselves took up the entire outside wall of the venue.

The most exciting part of the show from *Amiga Active*'s point of view was the array of new PDAs and mobile phones on display, being shown off to their full potential displaying full motion video.

Part of Sharp's stand was taken up by an Amiga section - yes, you heard that right, the Amiga once again had a presence at a large industry event. Sharp's Zaurus could be

Kickstart

Show Report

The Kickstart user group held their fourth annual Amiga show on May 26th. Sponsored by Analogic and Eyetech, the show moved to a new and larger venue this year.

Unfortunately, the turnout was substantially lower than previous years. It appears the main reason for this was that the show fell on a Bank holiday weekend, and on the hottest day of the year so far. Even the announcement that an AmigaOne would be on Eyetech's stand was insufficient to draw people away from the park / beach / pub.

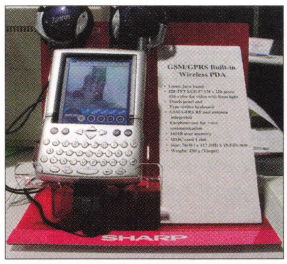
Numbers aside, those that attended seemed happy - although the exhibitors were disappointed with the number of potential customers. Eyetech did have an AmigaOne board in a tower case, but it wasn't working. This was a prototype board, the latest manufactured, although the design had moved on since that board was made.

The show was split into the three rooms: for retail exhibitors, user groups and a games area, which was full of people playing Shogo (see our review on page 50) and SWOS, while the user groups area was full of, well, user groups.

The low attendance undoubtedly put a dampener on the day, but the show was well organised and Kickstart should learn some valuable lessons and come back bigger and stronger next year.



Above: It may be old, but Sensible World of Soccer is always a guaranteed hit at Amiga shows.





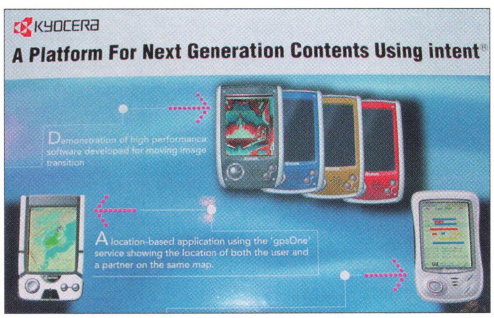
Above: Sharp's new handheld for the German market • Spot the Amiga (stickers)!

seen running several games from Amiga, and the Japanese electronics giant were also showing off a forthcoming PDA with built-in GSM/GPRS wireless communication technology, due to be marketed in Germany by Deutsche Telekom. This Linux/Java-based device (pictured above, which will also be running intent) sported a three-inch, touch panel, 176x220 16-bit display for video, 16MB of RAM, weighed in at 200g and measured just 76x117.5x19.5mm (WxHxD).

Tao Group, who had their own presence at JavaOne, were showing off their Java Virtual Machine and demonstrating their MID-P implementation which ran much quicker over intent than Sun's own implementation.

Sharing Tao Group's stand was another Japanese electronics manufacturer, Kyocera, who were showing their intent-powered prototype PDA running several Amiga apps. The specification for this new device hasn't yet been finalised, but it certainly looks very impressive. We could be spoilt for choice when it comes to AmigaDE-powered PDAs in the near future!

www.sun.com/javaone



Above: Kyocera are also planning to release intent-powered PDAs.

Sharp Chooses StrongARM for Amiga PDA

Sharp will be using Intel's StrongARM processor in a forthcoming version of its AmigaDE-powered Zaurus Personal Digital Assistant (PDA).

Previous Sharp devices have used Hitachi processors, but the StrongARM's low power consumption has helped make it the CPU of choice for the new handhelds, due to be released later this year.

A prototype of the Linux-based device, which will run the AmigaDE for access to Amiga content including a multitude of Java applications, was shown at this year's JavaOne conference. Devices are expected to begin shipping in the US as early as October.

Sharp plans to triple its PDA shipments to 1 million units in the year ending March 2002. The western device is expected to account for around one fifth of the total.

Interestingly, Hiroshi Uno, General Manager of Sharp's Mobile Systems Division stated that Sharp may replace the Hitachi processors used in its earlier line of handhelds once there is a way of running existing software on another chip.

Talking Tao

Rising Stars

I have just completed a week in San Francisco at the JavaOne conference organised by Sun Microsystems. There were probably slightly fewer visitors in the Moscone Center than last year due to the downturn in the American economy but the calibre improved.

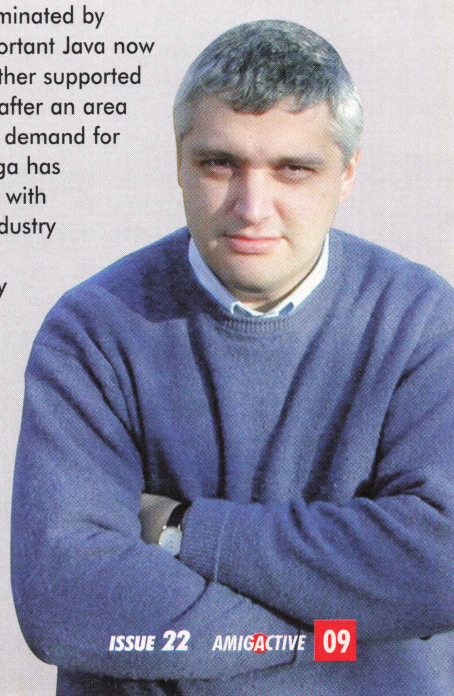
It was an extremely good event for both Tao and for Amiga, probably the first time in many years where Amiga has been a major star of a key event. The high profile for Amiga came about by the launch of the new PDA from Sharp running Amiga content on intent on Embedix (Embedded Linux from Lineo). This device appeared at the keynote speeches and was heavily pushed by Sun as well as Sharp. A number of industry key players were hunting Bill McEwen down for important talks and that has to be most encouraging for the Amiga community.

For Tao, we had a range of interesting demonstrations that garnered us significant attention. Sharp's Zaurus running both the Zaurus operating system and Embedix were obviously important, but we were also demonstrating EPOC-based products from Psion, and intent-native mobile devices from Kyocera and our own implementation on Compaq's iPAQ. iTRON, OS9000 and Windows were also represented on the Tao stand, while we were demonstrating all the way from low powered phones to proof of concept televisions. The ubiquity combined with the quality of the multimedia certainly differentiated Tao from the rest of the show's participants.

"That has to be exciting for Amiga and its constituents..."

JavaOne this year was dominated by wireless, indicating how important Java now is in this market sector. It further supported the decision of Amiga to go after an area where there is a need and a demand for the kind of content that Amiga has traditionally been associated with providing. During July the industry will see the bar being raised further in terms of the quality of content that people will be able to utilise on these platforms. That has to be exciting for Amiga and its constituents. It's certainly exciting for Tao!

Francis Charig,
Chairman of Tao Group.



News In Brief

Saku it to me!

The Finnish Amiga Users Group has announced its fourth annual Amiga event, Saku 2001, to be held on Saturday September 1st at the Science Centre Heureka in Vantaa, near Helsinki. The event is due to open at 12 noon and close at 6pm. Admission will be free of charge.

Following the success of Saku 99, which was visited by some 400-600 Amiga enthusiasts, Saku 2001 hopes to showcase some of the next generation AmigaDE-powered products which it is hoped will be available by the time of the show. Companies who would like to showcase their products at Saku 2001 are asked to contact event organiser Terho Henriksson at terho.henriksson@kopteri.net. Meanwhile, for further information on the event as it is announced, stay tuned to one of these web sites:

http://saku.amigafin.org
http://tzimmola.tky.hut.fi/sak/

Drop the Bomb

Multi-player Internet Bomberman clone, dynAMIte, has reached version 1.4. Download it now, from:

http://amisource.de/dynamite/

AmigaOne driving on

Work on the AmigaOne 1200 continues apace. By the time this issue of Amiga Active hits the shelves, the full PCI logic is expected to be implemented on the production version of the board, and work on porting the Amiga OS should have begun. A PPC native TCP/IP stack and filesystem, drivers for SCSI, UDMA and Ethernet, as well as Voodoo3 and Matrox G450 graphics cards are well underway.

The show goes on?

Due to the disappointing turnout at this year's Kickstart show (see separate show report this issue), Eyetech have extended their 'special show prices' offer until July 25th, while stocks last. Readers wanting to take advantage of these prices should refer to Eyetech's advert in our last issue (21), a copy of which will need to be sent in with any orders to take advantage of Eyetech's reduced prices.

Digital Almanac moves

The web site for Digital Almanac (reviewed last issue) has moved to the URL below (note the missing 'www'). Readers who would like to know more about the software are also invited to contact the author, Achim Stegemann: achimste@gmx.de

http://soft-ware.de/dalmanac

Schatztruhe

German Amiga distributors Schatztruhe have announced the availability of software titles Light Rom 9, ScanQuix 5, UltraConv 4 NG and Aminet 43, priced at DM69, DM99, DM69 and DM25 respectively. Aminet 43 will include the full version of video effects package Wildfire 5.

Schatztruhe have also started selling printer refill inks in the form of TintInk, priced at DM39 for 100ml of black ink and DM75 for 3x50ml coloured ink. Documentation and all necessary accessories (injector, plug, holder, etc.) are included with every refill set, which are available for Hewlett-Packard, Epson, Canon, IBM Lexmark, Xerox and compatible makes of printer.

www.schatztruhe.de

ReqAttack Update

A new version of ReqAttack, the Amiga requester enhancer, has been released on the author's homepage:

http://jacadcaps.tripod.com

PureBasic too...

PureBasic 2.32 has been released for AmigaOS. Better compatibility with Windows and Linux versions is promised. Visit the web site for online docs and mailing list info:

http://www.purebasic.com

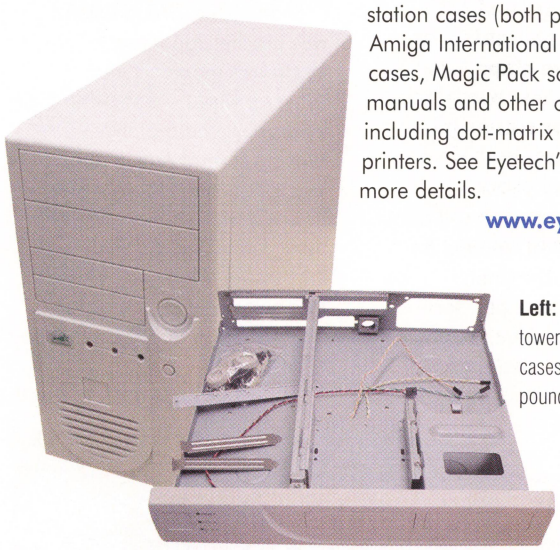
Sound as a Pound

Summer madness has overtaken Eyetech's Managing Director, Alan Redhouse, who has announced that they're giving away some of their stock to make more space in their warehouse for the forthcoming AmigaOne boards and pre-built systems.

All Eyetech are asking for, in return for such a bargain, is a £1 contribution per item towards administration, as well as postage costs if you're not collecting from them in person.

Items to be given away include mini-tower cases, low-profile net-station cases (both pictured here), Amiga International A1200 cases, Magic Pack software and manuals and other one-offs including dot-matrix and laser printers. See Eyetech's web site for more details.

www.eyetech.co.uk



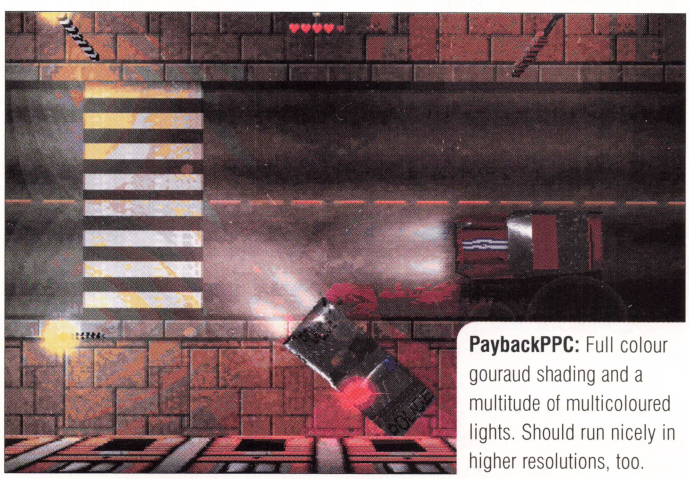
Left: Eyetech's mini tower and Netstation cases, yours for a pound, plus P&P.

The Power of Payback

James Daniels has been hard at work on a PowerPC port of *Amiga Active* Gold Award-winning Payback, reviewed in issue 19.

"The game now works in rampage and multi-player mode, although the sound mixer and single player missions have not yet been ported," James told *Amiga Active*. *"A full colour gouraud shading mode with support for up to 1000 dynamic light sources has also been added."*

www.apex-designs.net



PaybackPPC: Full colour gouraud shading and a multitude of multicoloured lights. Should run nicely in higher resolutions, too.

News focus: Microsoft attempt to change the face of software licensing

The way commercial software is both bought and deployed is set for its first significant upheaval since the widespread adoption of serial codes. With the release of Office XP, Microsoft is taking its first tentative steps into imposing a new ownership structure - or rather lack of ownership - on both domestic and business users.

Microsoft's plan is simple: you no longer buy its software - you rent it. Under the current method of software purchase, you pay them one fee and in return receive a copy of the operating system or application of choice, along with a certain number of licences (normally one). You own that software and are entitled to install and use it on the number of machines you have licences to cover.

> **"It all sounds a little sinister, but there is logic to it. After all, we rent televisions..."**

Advantage Microsoft?

Under its new scheme, called the Microsoft Advantage programme and launched alongside Office XP, you pay a much lower annual fee, and in return receive - if you wish - the most up-to-date version of the operating system or application you are paying for. The differences are that you do not own the application you are paying for, and the licences expire if you do not keep up the annual payments.

Microsoft's argument is that it will prove to be a more efficient way of selling software 'services' to businesses and users, and that it will fit better with an outsourced ASP (Application Service Provider) environment - where as a business you will be renting external application hosting services - making the renting of the applications a logical next step. We are likely to see a similar approach enter the consumer market as network-oriented systems such as AmigaDE will be well suited to rental of on-line usage of a remote application, replacing direct purchasing of the application for many uses.

You can still buy Office XP on the traditional terms of a single payment for ownership, and when Windows XP launches in October the two payment schemes will continue to run in parallel - but this raises important questions about on-going support that are still to be answered. The company refuses to be drawn on the specifics of how this will work for Windows XP, but a safe bet is that major service packs will only go to rental customers, while the rest will have to make do with critical security patches and the occasional bug-fix.

It all sounds a little sinister, but there is logic to it. After all, we rent televisions and videos in exactly the same way without complaint, while we also pay annual charges for extended warranties on a variety of products in our homes and offices. Both these rental systems draw close comparisons with the Microsoft Advantage scheme, yet do not provoke the same degree of complaint.

The attempts of Microsoft to reshape the software business also extend to the licensing and registration system of its software. Again, with Office XP the company is trialing a new licence code system.

Its licence keys are traditionally passive, in that they are not tied to a specific machine, and can be used over and over again. This meant that anybody could take a copy of Windows, Office, etc., duplicate the disk a million times over, and give them away or sell them on with the same licence code.

It's the same situation that has blighted the Amiga marketplace since its inception, and one that helped kill the commercial viability of the platform long before Commodore went under.

Gone in 50 uses

To combat this, Microsoft has imposed a new system whereby your licence key or keys supplied with the software are only temporary, good for 50 uses. After that the application reverts to being a viewer only until you contact Microsoft, either electronically over the Internet or on the phone, to get a permanent code.

Your permanent code is based on your temporary code, the configuration of your system and the date of installation. This means that if you upgrade your machine or reinstall, you will have to reapply for a new code.

Whilst this means more hassle for the user, it allows Microsoft to closely monitor who is using its software, and how many iterations of the same licence code are doing the rounds.

It may be of interest to know that this article was written on a PC running Office XP - a copy of Office XP that will expire in 4 more goes unless I contact Microsoft for an activation code.

Chris Green A

Product Watch

Maybe developers like to confuse their faithful public by announcing products prematurely and then putting them through several stages of re-design before release.

Perhaps they'd prefer it if we just lumped everything into a "Sometime This Year. Or Next" timeframe to avoid getting people's hopes up. But this isn't the *Amiga Active* way.

Developers take note: Our readers want to know when to expect things so they can save their hard-earned pennies and buy your products! This is the place to tell them about it!

3Q 2001:

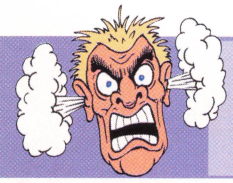
- **Repulse** - Zorro soundcard from AlienDesign. We have one. We're trying to get it working.
- **iFusion** - We have it. We're trying to get it working.
- **New Mediators** - Three new models! We hope to have something next issue.
- **Prometheus** - Next issue.
- **SharkPPC G3/G4** - Mmm.
- **Earth2140 Missions** - For e.p.i.c's real-time strategy port, reviewed in AA20.
- **PaybackPPC** - See separate news item on your left!
- **AmigaOS 4.0** - Which will require one of the following:
- **AmigaOne** - See "News In Brief" this month (left).
- **Pianeta Amiga 2001** - Details have apparently changed. We await news.
- **Saku 2001** - Vantaa, Finand (see News In Brief).

In the distance:

- **AmigaOS 4.2, 4.5, 5.0** - At six month intervals.
- **Many Games** - See last issue's Active Gamer.

If we've missed something out, please tell us! E-mail upcoming@amigactive.com

upcoming@amigactive.com



Rants and Raves



Do the Right Thing, Sharp!

Pop quiz: gonna buy a Zaurus? Will this Amiga powered PDA light your fire? John Chandler kicks off the debate...

Maybe. I already own a pocket 'Amiga' in the form of an old but faithful Palm Pilot Pro. It does pretty much everything I want in a handheld machine, but it's old and I'm thinking of buying a replacement. To buy a Zaurus it'll have to satisfy the requirements of my trusty Palm.

Firstly, the UI needs to be simple, low-fuss, quick access. Typically two or three clicks to get to my information, presented in a clutter-free environment. I don't like waiting when using a handheld. For me, this is where Palm has always excelled so I demand nothing less.

Battery life needs to be good. I'm happy to recharge every few days or buy replacement batteries every couple of months. I'm not a heavy user each day, but enough to worry about this issue - there's nothing worse than having to lug around a pocketful of AAAs.

My Palm co-operates with my main home machine, an Amiga (of course), and it's vital that I can still maintain that smooth desktop synchronisation. I'm happy with third party software, but I don't want to find myself unable to use the PDA in tandem with my main platform because it doesn't happen to be Windows. Hopefully the AmigaDE factor has banished this fear for good.

It's got to be rock-solid and stable. I've only reset my Palm twice in the last 3 years, and then only because of some dodgy shareware that didn't like such an old Palm. I shouldn't even have that happen on me. Sharp, take heed!

Finally, it's got to have a healthy third-party software market - I'm not much of a handheld games player (well, maybe Tetris), but I need to know I can build upon the basic built-in applications with simple databases, document readers, outliners, editors, and other small utilities that I can then take with me as the need for the day dictates.

John Chandler

I Want My 5mx

Okay, so there's going to be a PDA running the AmigaDE. Is that tempting enough if you're happy with what you already have?

Nope. What do I need it for? My day-to-day handheld needs are more than adequately managed by a Psion 5mx. While I'm disappointed in Symbian's failure to penetrate more devices and attract more and better developers, I can't argue with results. My agenda is clearly delineated, the built-in spreadsheet helps me keep track of deadbeat publishers who don't pay invoices promptly, and battery life is more than adequate.

Although I am in the minority, I find keyboard-equipped clamshell PDAs vastly more useful and overall more practical than stylus-driven handhelds, another strike against the Amiga-Zaurus. I do have a Palm m100 on my desk, but that was purchased on a whim as I had an opportunity to pick one up for less than the going rate, and in my work as a tech journalist it's helpful to have a mainstream platform nearby.

Since I am not a programmer, I need at least one of two things out of a PDA: built-in applications that address a particular need better than a current solution, or extremely attractive third party programs. With the former being managed competently by the Psion, and the latter looking dim, what would be the purpose of buying one? Other attempts to crack this space with an oddball format, such as the VTech Helio, failed to catch on in the broader market, and I see little reason for this stab to be any different.

If I had money to blow on another PDA to clutter my desk (which I don't), it would likely go towards the purchase of a used late-model Windows CE 2.0 clamshell PDA. I don't think Windows CE is terribly good, but I'd be willing to explore the wide range of applications from the comfort of a cheap keyboard-equipped model. I look at the Zaurus and I see no real keyboard, no apps to speak of, and no reason to buy.

Jason Compton

Rants and Raves



Justify My Desire

A palm format PDA has to be something special to persuade a dedicated clamshell man.

I want a Zaurus. Of this I have no doubt. Why? Reason one: drool factor. I've yet to have a chance to play with one, but from what I have seen, the Zaurus has major drool factor potential.

It's a very high spec PDA with a very nice screen and a processor which seriously embarrasses my Psion s5. It looks gorgeous, runs Java and AmigaDE apps, and it's got that dead sexy slide-down Qwerty keyboard.

Reason two: it's an Amiga. Yes, I know this is a pretty poor excuse to buy something, but I have to admit that it would be hard for me not to buy the damn thing simply because it's something I've waited so long for.

However, there's one major reason I might not get one. I'm a clamshell man. My Psion is a real pocket computer for me, allowing me to write on the move. Cool as the Zaurus' Qwerty keyboard looks, I harbor no illusions that I'll want to type long documents into a Zaurus, and a tall palmtop format screen just isn't as appropriate for word processing, which is my major use for a PDA. Palm PDAs are unable to fulfil my work needs, so to me, they're simply toys - and I already have a long list of expensive toys to buy.

For me to justify my desire for a Zaurus, it would have to do a lot more than current palmtops do - which it may. I admit to wanting something portable I can use comfortably for Internet access, and I admit that a good handheld gaming device would be a real temptation. The Zaurus has the potential to tempt me more than any current palm device, but I have a real problem with the form factor. Of course, if there was a next generation colour Psion running the AmigaDE, nobody could hold me back!

Andrew Korn

Take me to Monkey Island

If you want to sell a Zaurus to the masses, it's all a matter of the killer app.

The Zaurus is, as stated on Sharp's web site (sharp-world.com), *"intended for mobile business use."* For this reason alone, I wouldn't buy one - I'm always sat at a desktop computer at work. I wouldn't buy a Zaurus for work unless it would actually get me away from my desk: something a palmtop wouldn't do, purely because of its form factor.

Now, a laptop, possibly. Sitting outside in the sun, still connected to the office network and the Internet via some form of wireless networking (it seems that Bluetooth is to wireless networking what BoXeR is to Amiga hardware, but it'll arrive one day) and still being able to get on with the job in hand - writing and pulling together a magazine - is my idea of a better working environment.

Tapping out an e-mail on a minuscule keypad or straining to read more than a paragraph of text on a palm-sized screen certainly isn't. But then, I'm a journalist. Doubtless there are occupations where a handheld terminal like the Zaurus would be a tremendous boost to productivity, but writing certainly isn't one of them.

No, there's only one thing that would convince me to buy such a device - the fabled 'killer app' - and the way I see things at the moment, there's only one way I could be tempted into shelling out a fistful of tenners on a PDA: quality games. Promise me colourful, addictive, possibly multi-player, hopefully wirelessly linked gaming and you've just sold me a Zaurus. Tell me I've got to use a PDA for writing and I wouldn't get out of bed in a morning, but show me a game like Monkey Island - the display is 320x240 - just rotate Guybrush's world through 90 degrees - and hand me a well-crafted stylus and I'd have trouble sleeping for days.

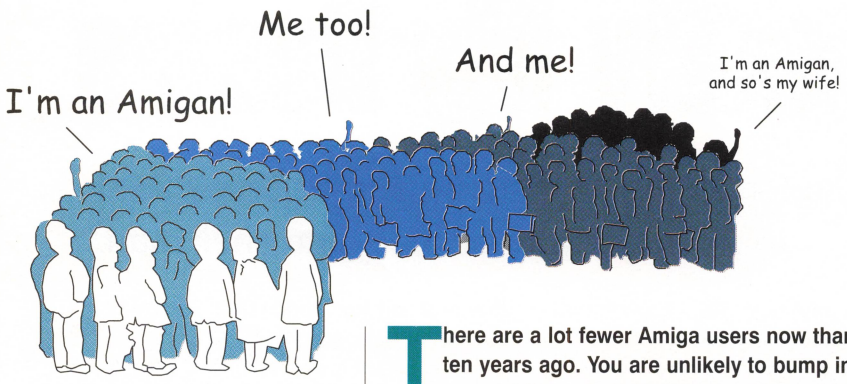
David Stroud A

Have Your Say

You've heard what we think about the Zaurus, you've seen the pictures and you've read the news reports... but would you buy one?

Write to the usual address on page 64 or e-mail interactive@amigactive.com

Amiga User Groups



User groups are playing an important role in the Amiga community these days...

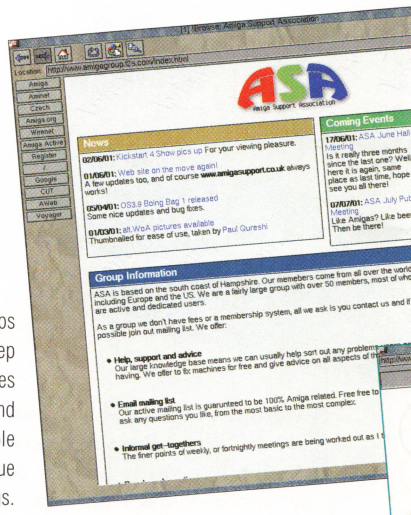
There are a lot fewer Amiga users now than, say, ten years ago. You are unlikely to bump into many at the pub or the supermarket, which is why user groups are playing an important part in maintaining contact between us. With the recent formation of AmiGroupsUK, there is now more focus on co-operation between user groups. More effort is being put into groups helping each other and working together. What do user groups do, why should you consider joining one, how can you find one and what should you do if there isn't one in your area? For the answers to these questions, and maybe a few more, read on.

Regular meetings

Most user groups meet once a month, usually on a weekday evening, although some meet weekly. There are two types of meeting. The more common is what's known as a hall meeting. Users can bring along their Amigas and set them up for others to see or use for a variety of purposes. People give demonstrations of new software or hardware (it's good to see a product being used before buying it), and talking to someone who has been using it for weeks or months gives you a better idea of how it will suit your needs. As well as demos, users give tutorials on using particular pieces of software, or setting up specific hardware. Some user groups create compilation CDs of freely distributable software and files, like mod or animation collections, and burn copies of these at the meetings.

> "User groups provide an excellent opportunity to deal with problems."

User groups provide an excellent opportunity to deal with problems. Instead of trying to describe symptoms over the phone or by e-mail, and trying out suggestions received in a similar manner, you can take the problem machine along to the user group and let others see exactly what's wrong. There's a good chance someone else has experienced the same or similar, and already found a cure.



Right: Many user groups use the Internet to keep in touch. Web sites provide information and mailing lists enable discussion to continue beyond meetings.

> "Several groups run regular games tournaments..."

Getting together is also an opportunity to buy and sell Amiga kit. Many people have upgraded at low cost by buying redundant hardware from those who are upgrading further. Some dealers have user group discount schemes and shareware can be registered in quantities to gain discounts. Some user groups have also negotiated special discounts with local dealers.

Most meetings have several Amigas online, so users without their own Internet connection can see what this online malarkey is all about, before deciding whether to shell out on the hardware and software needed to get their own machines online. Networking Amigas locally also makes multi-player games competitions possible. Playing a networked game over a local network is so much better than using a dial-up Internet connection. Several groups run regular games tournaments. However, the most important facet of a user group meeting is the opportunity to get together and talk about the latest news or someone's latest acquisition.

The alternate type of meeting is usually held in a pub. This doesn't give the opportunity to set up Amigas to run software or competitions. It is more of a social event, where like-minded people get together to talk about their favourite computers. This type of meeting tends too be held by smaller groups, often as a frequent event with hall meetings less often. Meeting in a hall means the user group has to pay for the hire of a room, electricity and maybe phone charges for an Internet connection. This is generally paid for by a small subscription. On the other hand, the only cost of a pub meeting is when it's your round.

Other activities

Meetings are the normal activities of most user groups, but that's not all some groups do. Kickstart hold an annual barbecue, as well as the Kickstart show. AmiSEK take a stand at a local computer fair to reach out to a wider audience. Some produce newsletters for their members, but SEAL go one better and produce a high quality magazine called "Clubbed". This is an example of how user groups are moving into areas previously only occupied by commercial organisations.

While Clubbed doesn't have the production quality of a commercial magazine like *Amiga Active*, it is well written and produced. At least one AA contributor started off by writing for Clubbed. The magazine isn't only for club members, anyone can take out a subscription.

Another example of something that has moved from the original starting point of a user group to a general service is Kicksoft. Kicksoft is now a separate company in its own right supplying pre-registered shareware, professionally packaged on CD-ROM.



Above: Kicksoft is a commercial spin-off of the Kickstart user group, now serving Amiga users across the UK

Below: Some groups use their web sites to showcase the efforts of individual members.

"...a new visitor doesn't feel like a total stranger walking into a crowded room. New members are always welcome."

Most of all, it's fun!

The small size of the current Amiga market means that most user group meetings are small affairs. Some of the smaller groups can have attendance drop into single figures at times. Larger groups, like Kickstart and SEAL, have more. The larger groups also tend to attract people from further afield. Whatever the size of the group, the relatively small number of people attending means a new visitor doesn't feel like a total stranger walking into a crowded room. New members are always welcome.

We spoke to representatives of several user groups. They gave varying answers to some of the questions we asked them, but when asked *"why do people go to your meetings?"*, their answers were very similar. Chris Green of Kickstart said: *"It's a fun and informal opportunity to seek help and advice and to meet with other Amiga users.... our members like the opportunity to meet like-minded people and share experiences"*. Mickey Sutton of SEAL (South Essex Amiga Link) told us: *"Because they enjoy the friendly atmosphere, they obtain help and learn."* and from Paul Qureshi of the Amiga Support Association in Southampton: *"Two reasons mainly... to keep the link with other Amigans and to enjoy the company of friends."* While the advantages of using Amigas with others around to help are important, the social side is equally important. People go to user group meetings to meet with like minded people, to talk about the news they've read in magazines or on the web, to exchange tips and gossip, but mainly to make new friends and meet old ones.

Finding a user group

So if you want to see for yourself, how do you find your nearest user groups? There is a list of user groups on these pages (right), although it is by no means comprehensive, containing only those details that were e-mailed to us whilst researching this article. This list is also on this month's *Amiga Active* CD. If other user groups want to send us the relevant information, we will of course be happy to update the list and include it on subsequent AACDs.

Meanwhile, AmigaSoc have a user group finder on their web site at http://uk.amigasoc.org/usergroups/exsearch.html. This takes your postcode and returns details of your most local user groups. Unfortunately,

continued overleaf...

Make Contact!

Here are some contact details for a number of UK-based Amiga User Groups. See our CD this month for more information, including contact addresses and phone numbers.

AGNES
(Amiga Group North East Scotland)
http://clix.to/agnes
Contact: Sandy Brownlee, sandyb@www.com or David McMinn, dave@blitz-2000.co.uk

Amiga North Thames
www.amiganorththames.co.uk
Contact: Steven L. Croucher, steve@sl-croucher.com or Michael Carrillo, michael.carrillo@ukonline.co.uk

Amiga Support Association
(Southampton)
www.amigasupport.co.uk
Contact: Paul Harding, lindis@btinternet.com or Paul Qureshi, paul.qureshi@btinternet.com

AmiSEK
(Amiga Society East Kent)
Venue: St. John Hall, High St., Wingham, Kent.
Meetings: Fridays, 7pm-11pm (closed August)
Contact: John Worthington, pagan@amiga.ca

BAUK
(Bodmin Amiga Users Klub)
Contact: Nick Clover, bauk@cyberwaif.com

this has not been updated for a while; some groups no longer exist and some new ones have been formed. This was one of the factors that influenced the formation of AmiGroupsUK - the need to provide accurate and up to date information on finding, joining and creating user groups. The AmiGroupsUK web site should be online by the time you read this, so look at www.amigroups.co.uk for more up-to-date information.

Finally, what if there isn't a user group in your area? In the true spirit of the Amiga community, the solution is to create one yourself. To create a user group you need three things: a venue, some like-minded people to attend and plenty of enthusiasm. Initially, the venue need only be somewhere you can get together and talk. Once you have a few people together, you can start looking for a meeting room.

It's worth getting in touch with other user groups, directly or through AmiGroupsUK, to get assistance and information. Attending a couple of meetings elsewhere will give you some ideas on how to proceed. Talking to the organisers will probably give you some help in avoiding pitfalls.

Blackpool Amiga Club
Contact: Barry Riddiford, brnw31096@cableinet.co.uk or Matt Morris, 01253 820151

GAUG (Glasgow Amiga Users Group)
www.gaug.clubamiga.co.uk
Contact: Duncan Gow, duncan@gow2.fsnet.co.uk

Kickstart
www.kickstart-amiga.co.uk
Venue: Brook Hall, Brox Road, Ottershaw, Surrey.
Meetings: Last Monday of every month.
Contact: Chris Green, chris@kickstart-amiga.co.uk

SEAL (South Essex Amiga Link)
www.seal-amiga.co.uk
Venue: Northlands Park Community Centre, Felmores, Basildon, Essex.
Contact: Mick Sutton, sicky@btinternet.com

SSAmiga (Wigan and West Lancs)
www.ssamiga.co.uk
Contact: Wes Potter, wesley.potter@btinternet.com or Ralph Twiss, ralph@twiss.org

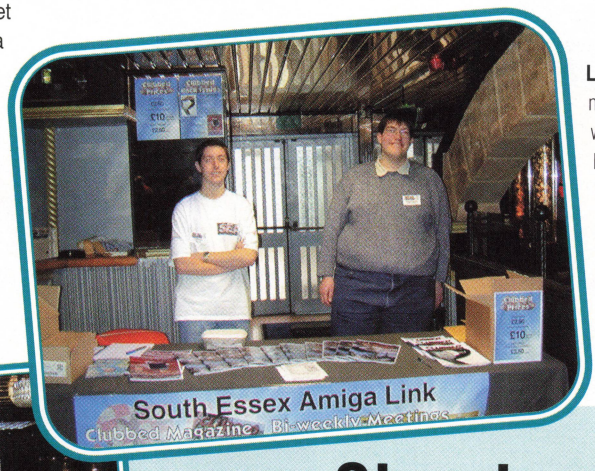
West London Computer Club
Contact: Alan Paynter, alan@steelweb.co.uk

AmiGroupsUK

AmiGroupsUK held their first meeting at the alt-WoA show in February of this year. The meeting was also attended by Fleecy Moss and there was a great deal of enthusiasm in the room, as well as some useful feedback from Fleecy. We spoke to Paul Qureshi and Michael Carrillo about AmiGroupsUK, to find out how the venture is proceeding.

AA: When did you first think of forming AmiGroupsUK?

PQ: I had this idea a couple of years ago, when I thought it might be a good idea to try and get everyone talking



Left: Buy our magazine or we'll send the boys round! SEAL were selling their magazine, "Clubbed", at the alt-WoA show.



Above: Dealers are often swamped by Amiga users eager to see and buy new gear at usergroup shows.

Showing Off

While most user group activities are aimed mainly at their members, there is one area where user groups now help a lot of Amiga users; Amiga shows. There hasn't been a commercial UK Amiga show since the World of Amiga 99, and that wouldn't have happened without a lot of pressure and hard work from some user group members. Since then, with nobody organising major shows, the user groups have filled the gap with their smaller, local shows.

After the continual complaints from Amiga users in the north of England and Scotland about World of Amiga always being held in London, the Huddersfield Amiga User Group (HAUG) held a show in Yorkshire earlier this year. It was a great success - the visitors enjoyed themselves and went home with plenty of goodies, the dealers went home with empty vans and full cashboxes. It demonstrated that there is a market for shows outside London, something the commercial show organisers were never willing to gamble significant amounts of money on.

"...user groups have filled the gap with their smaller, local shows."

There are two other shows that have already become part of the UK Amiga calendar. The fourth Kickstart show was held in May (see our news pages this issue for a report) and SEAL will be hosting SEAL-O-RAMA again this autumn. These shows perform a vital service in helping maintain the current Amiga market. They are the only opportunity for dealers and customers to meet, for people to actually see goods before they buy them. Most Amiga users do not have a local Amiga dealer, so without shows, everything would have to be bought mail order.

on a UK-only mailing list. I talked it over with the guys at ASA (Amiga Support Association) quite a lot, and finally decided to do it at the start of this year.

I e-mailed every user group I could find, Mikey got a few I had missed and soon just about every UK user group was represented.

MC: I thought that Paul's idea was a good one, and really wanted to do my bit to try and encourage more people to join a user group near them, particularly after having set up Amiga North Thames and seeing just how rewarding and worthwhile the whole concept is.

AA: What are you trying to achieve?

PQ: The main goal was initially to get a dialogue going between user groups, and help them help themselves. That has changed slightly now to include a leadership element that it seems is required to make thing happen.

MC: I Agree with that, although there were many user groups in the UK hardly any of them had any communication with other user groups, the mailing list that Paul set up is a good start on getting user groups to talk and help each other out.

AA: What have you achieved so far?

PQ: Well, we proved that there are still lots of dedicated groups out there. I think we've managed to give some people a lifeline to other Amiga users. Our meeting at the alt.WoA show as a great help to many people too, not only managing to sort out a few old issues but also to get a good feeling of the way things are currently in the Amiga scene from people. The main thing is the mailing list though, it's not only unique but also gives people a reason to keep their user group going.

"I think we've managed to give some people a lifeline to other Amiga users..."

MC: Plus, for those groups who are in single figures membership wise, a chance to talk to the more successful user groups and perhaps glean ideas and get some support.

AA: Where do you think you can succeed when other user group organisations have failed?

PQ: The UK has always been seen as an island, even though mainland Europe is only just over the channel for some of us. So far, no other organisation has dealt only with the UK, and it's UK issues that are important here (stop me if I sound like William Hague!) The UK/European scenes are definitely very distinct. The closest anyone has come in the past was the AmigaSoc groups database, but we are much more than that.

MC: Well at least we hope to be more than that, AmigaSoc were very useful in providing a UK user group database along with their excellent Lost Souls Database, without which, ANT and many other user groups wouldn't have been formed. But those guys have to earn a living first, so we are now taking up where they have left off and hope to carry the torch for UK user groups.

Where AmiGroupsUK will differ will be in the way we will aim to be more proactive, having a "hands on approach" - meaning that we will seek to co-ordinate with user groups around the UK in helping to promote their location and hopefully starting new user groups as our lost user database builds up. We hope to achieve this by the following means:

* Mailshots
* Adverts in Newsagents' windows
* Taking advantage of newspapers/magazines that carry free advertising
* Magazine Articles (such as this one!)
* The amigroups.co.uk web site, which should be up and running soon.

AA: What are the benefits to individual user groups of joining AmiGroupsUK?

PQ: Joining costs nothing, apart from a few more e-mails in your in-box or perhaps the odd letter/phone call to one of us if you don't have Internet access. On the other hand, you gain access to all the other UK user groups directly, and we offer any and all support we can too.

AA: What can user groups do to help AmiGroupsUK, themselves and other user groups.

PQ: All the usual things user groups do help us out. Even just meeting up and existing helps us indirectly. More practically, all user groups have knowledgeable people with particular skills, and often produce news letters, CD-ROMs and the like. All of these can be of use to AGUK, simply by making them available to us we can pass them on to other user groups who will then be able to make use of them. A good example is the SSAmiga Club CD 1, which is now being turned into the free AGUK CD.

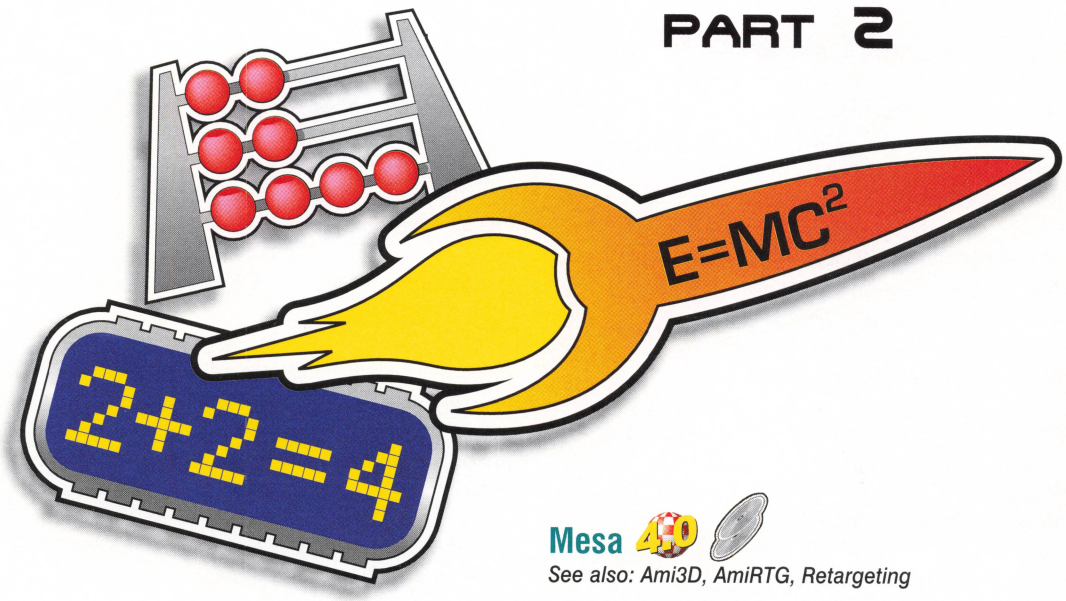
The other most important thing we need right now, is someone to be our "telephone receptionist", in other words we need some kind soul to volunteer themselves and their phone number to take calls during the day from lost Amigans around the UK and point them to their nearest user group or if that isn't possible, pass the orphaned user's details on to us so that we can compile onto a user database enabling the possibility to start more groups. If you can help, please get in touch.

AA: Anything else you'd like to say about AmiGroupsUK?

PQ & MC: We are a young organisation, but an important one. Help us help you!

A Bluffer's Guide to the FUTURE

PART 2



We continue last month's glossary of terminology for the new Amiga, from Memory Protection to Zaurus... and explore some pretty wacky concepts along the way.

KEY

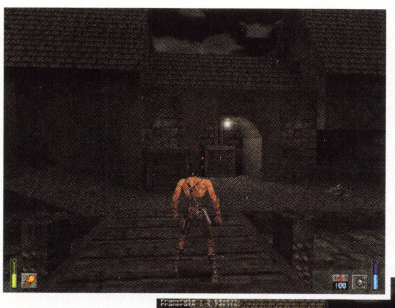
- Due in OS4.0
- Due in OS4.2
- Due in OS5.0
- Hardware related
- Software related
- Buzzword bingo
- Simple explanation
- Techie explanation
- Rocket science!

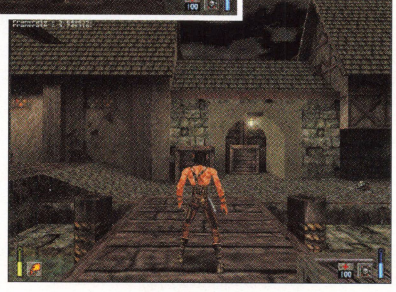
Mesa

See also: Ami3D, AmiRTG, Retargeting

A 3D graphics interface that allows programmers to write 3D graphics for games or applications that will run on any supported hardware.

Mesa is an OpenGL compatible 3D API which effectively gives OpenGL support without the associated licensing issues, not to mention the advantages (and of course disadvantages) of an open-source API. Mesa 3.4.1 is the version that will run on the new AmigaOS at first.





Below: Without Mesa, images are flatter and less involving. **Left:** With Mesa and some 3D hardware, there's plenty more atmosphere.

Memory Protection

A system that stops one program that crashes from causing any other program, or indeed the computer itself, from crashing.

MP allocates areas of memory to each task or application, marking it as protected so that no other task can utilise that memory space until it is freed up. This makes it impossible for one task to write over the memory space of another task, thus causing the second task to fail.

OpenGL

See Mesa

Orthogonal Persistence 4.2

One of the advanced OS features that have previously only existed in experimental OS design that Amiga plan on bringing to the end user with OS5.0. Orthogonal Persistence is a complex way of saying you won't lose your data if you forget to save.

A way of implementing data storage so that the division between persistent data (stored in permanent storage) and ephemeral data (stored in memory) is removed. Data transformations are persistent at all times. Researchers have put forward many subtly different approaches to the problem; in practical terms we may see data objects stored with a set of persistent descriptors of each transformation applied to them (i.e. information about how they have been changed), allowing prior steps in a series of transformations to be recovered.

PCI

Peripheral Component Interconnect, the industry standard for plug-in hardware such as sound and graphics cards. This standard is currently available as an add-on for classic Amigas in the form of the G-Rex, Mediator and soon Prometheus busboards, and will replace Zorro as the standard card interface for the AmigaOne.

PDP Sensory Processing 4.2

To be honest, we don't really know either!

Physical-Digital-Physical sensory processing is a term Amiga have applies to a process by which real world information can be gathered, then stored and manipulated digitally for rebroadcast or interactive presentation to the real world. They have not yet detailed the process they will be using but mysteriously describe this system as a structure to allow the lossless transfer and manipulation of any sensory data.

It has been hinted that this will be tied in with the proposed OpenML cross-platform Multimedia API standard.

Personal Java 4.1

Personal Java is a subset of the Java language from Sun, specifically designed for Internet connected consumer electronics devices. It's supported in AmigaOS 4.2 and upwards through Tao Group's intent.

Personal Java is a subset of Java consisting of a Java VM (Virtual Machine) and a set of general-purpose classes optimised for low-footprint devices. It's compact enough for Mobile Phone usage or running Internet-based Java applets on PDAs (Personal Digital Assistants), but supports the full AWT (Abstract Windowing Toolkit) for interface design.

QOS brokering 4.2

QOS stands for Quality of Service. The QOS broker is a component of the Operating System that knows about the hardware it is running on. Applications can require a particular quality of service from the broker, meaning that they can request guarantees of the hardware's ability to perform the tasks it sets before it tries to perform them, and if necessary scale the functionality of the application to suit the hardware that is available.

Retargeting 4.0

See also: AmiRTA, AmiRTG, Ami2D, Ami3D, Mesa

The process by which a program calling for hardware resources can be redirected to whatever hardware the user has installed, by means of a software interface that sits between the application and the hardware it runs on. For example, retargetable graphics allows an image to be drawn without any knowledge of the graphics hardware being used.

Semantic context 4.2

The user can apply descriptions to any form of data, so that that data can be organised according to individual requirements, rather than according to a meaningless placement of the data in a hard drive directory structure. This means, for example, that rather than having to look in ten different directories for all your pictures, the computer will be able to generate a virtual directory of all your pictures.

Semantic context (continued)

Semantic context allows any number of arbitrary content descriptors (i.e. meta data, or 'data about data') and object associations to be applied to any data object, so that files can be organised or queried according to content.

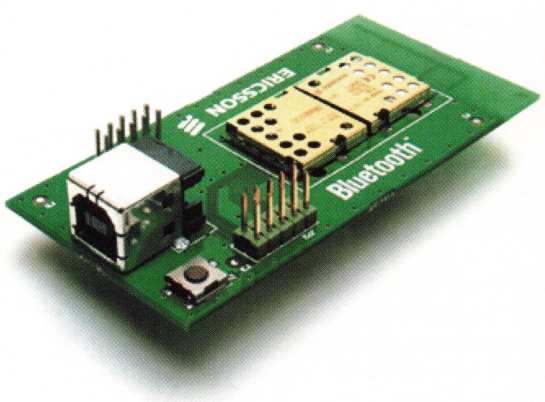
SHEEP 4.1

An advanced scripting language developed for AmigaDE, which will replicate and extend the functionality provided by ARexx in current versions of the AmigaOS.

Wireless Networking 4.2

Say goodbye to the spaghetti junction beneath your desk, and wave a fond(?) farewell to Ethernet, because wireless networking is on the way. Using technology standards such as Bluetooth or HyperLAN (there are currently a number of competing standards, each with slightly different market positioning), computers will be able to network with each other using radio frequency transmission, automatically connecting to a network that they have permission to join when they come within range of other networked devices. This connectivity can also apply to peripheral devices such as printers and scanners, allowing them to be accessed by any computer in range, with no need for long cables or network printing.

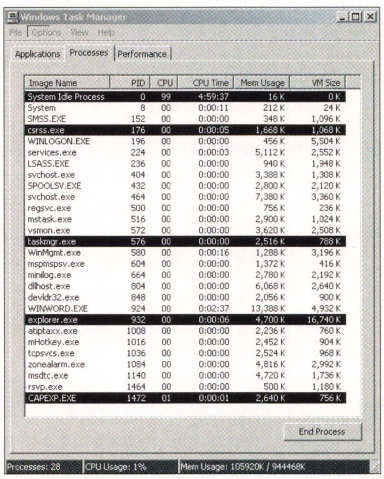
"This connectivity can also apply to peripherals such as printers and scanners..."



Below: Say goodbye to spaghetti junction, thanks to Bluetooth.

Virtual Memory 4.0

VM allows an application access to an area of space on the computer's hard drive, which the application "sees" as real memory. Virtual Memory is dependant on the relatively slow hard drive and is therefore much slower than real memory. OS4.0 will provide VM only to applications programmed specifically for it, and on a program-by-program basis.



Above: Windows provides Virtual Memory functions, but not very cleverly.

Zaurus

The Zaurus line of PDAs (Personal Digital Assistants, or hand-held computers to you and me) from electronics giant Sharp has been the mainstay in the Japanese PDA market for some years, filling a similarly dominant role there as Palm have in the US.

There have been some early Zaurus PDAs released in the West, but they were poor models and never achieved success. The current Japanese models are state-of-the-art PDAs with some of the most powerful processors and best screens on the market. Tao group's intent is already available for ZaurusOS-based PDAs in Japan, and before the end of the year, Sharp will be releasing models of the Zaurus for the Western market, using Linux as the underlying OS and running the AmigaDE as a software layer.



Right: Sharp's Zaurus, powered by AmigaDE.

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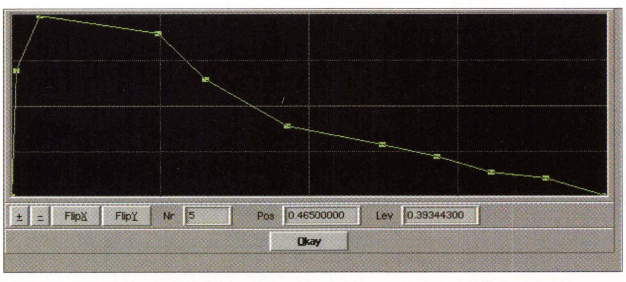
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SFX

Amiga Active samples the delights of the little-known audio package with some big ideas.

Sound FX, also known as SFX, is a sound sample editor and creator. The word "sample" is used to mean several things. When an analogue sound is digitised, the voltage of the signal is measured at regular intervals such as 44,100 times per second (Hz). This gives a sequence of numbers which describes the sound more or less accurately, depending on the sample rate and whether the numbers are 8-bit, 16-bit or more.

A "sample" can be a single number, or a series of numbers describing a single sound such as one note played on one instrument, or a series describing a short piece of music such as a single bar of rhythm (often called a loop). A recording of a complete piece of music can be treated as just a long sample, but generally the amount of data involved is so large that it has to be handled on disk, using some kind of virtual memory. Samples a few seconds long can easily be handled in RAM, even with several stages of undo.



Above: You can set the ADSR of a sample by moving the points.

change is made, which allows you to revert instantly to any previous version. This is so convenient that it is worth the extra memory it uses - and you can always save the older stages to disk if memory gets low.

As each process makes a new window containing a new version of the sample, the screen can get cluttered. An excellent "Clean Up" function deals with this, restoring all the sample windows to the same basic size and tiling them. The author has put a great deal of thought into the interface for this program.

"The author has put a good deal of thought into the interface..."

SoundFX and audio files

SoundFX is most suited to editing and processing single-note or loop samples. Although it does have a virtual memory function for handling big files, this is not yet reliable in the current version, and it is better to disable it and work from RAM. Most people now have plenty of memory and will find they can deal with the majority of samples without any problems.

A good feature of SFX is that, like Image Engineer, it makes a new copy of the data after each

Sound files can be loaded in 16 formats. This includes all the usual types, along with MP3 and the Studio16 format from the famous AD516 sound card. A direct CDDA ripper is included, for which you set your SCSI/IDE device and drive, and the make of player. The latter is important

22 Sound FX	26 Plex Writer	28 WinUAE JIT	32 Shareware	48 Active Gamer
Can this Amiga app compete with programs on other platforms?	The latest 16x CDRW from Plextor, and some advice on multi-session CDs.	Is the Unusable Amiga Emulator finally Usable? Maybe, Just in Time...	We're so happy, we've got a new emailer and we're on a role. Bootiful!	We're all off to Planet Zed this month, thanks to the AmigaDE and ZeoNeo...

Reviews Contents

because some players supply the 16-bit data with the high bits first, and others with the low bits first.

I found that this was also a problem when importing some WAV files. It would be useful to have an operator to swap the high and low bytes. If you look at the waveform display, it is obvious that the top and bottom halves are exchanged. The resulting sound is a loud mess.

Whilst 16 formats can be loaded, 14 formats can be saved, the exceptions being Maestro and CDDA. The program does not include any CD-writing software. One thing that is included in the latest version, however, is a very useful batch converter, which will convert a whole drawer full of samples to a single format.

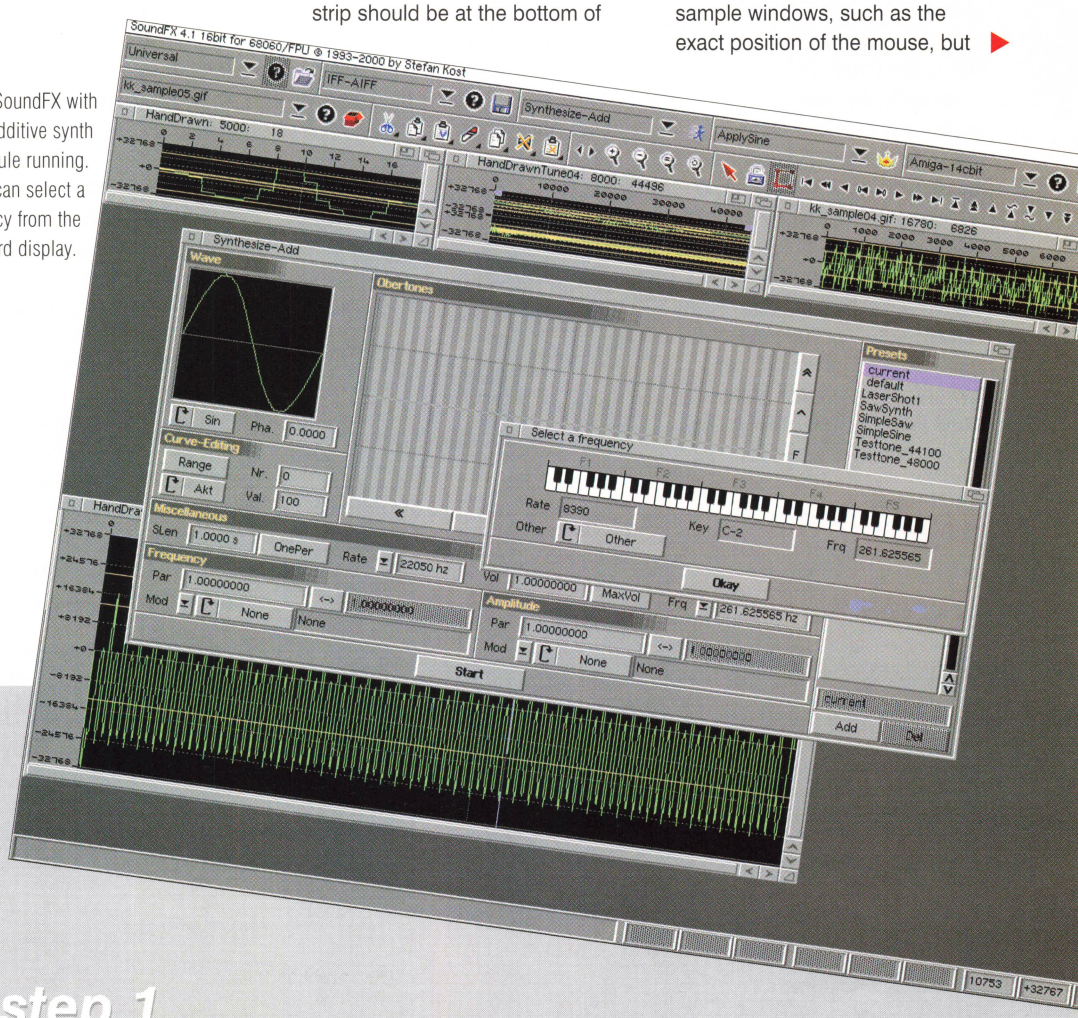
Interface design

For the latest version of Sound FX, the interface has been made completely graphical. There are two strips of icons and information at the top of the screen and one at the bottom. On a lower resolution screen (the smallest usable width is 640 pixels), the graphics will re-arrange into three strips. Testing for this review was done at 1024x768, but an even higher resolution would work just as well, if not better. The GUI is fully font-sensitive and retargetable, and should work nicely on a Matrox card in an AmigaOne.

"The GUI is fully font-sensitive and retargetable, and should work nicely on a Matrox card in an AmigaOne."

As usual with icon-based interfaces, this one is baffling when you first encounter it. What are all those clipboards about? However, most of the icons are explained in text in a window at the bottom of the screen, so the system is not too hard to learn.

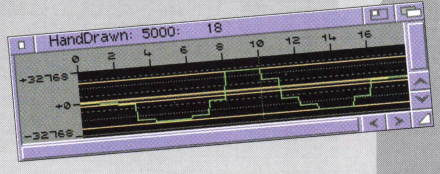
Having said that, there is no obvious reason why the bottom strip should be at the bottom of the screen. If it was moved to the top, just under the icons, the answers would be next to the puzzles, instead of being as far away as possible. Also on this bottom strip is a collection of numbers in windows. These refer to various parameters in the sample windows, such as the exact position of the mouse, but ▶



Right: SoundFX with its additive synth module running. You can select a frequency from the keyboard display.

SOUND FX Tutorial
Drawing a Tune

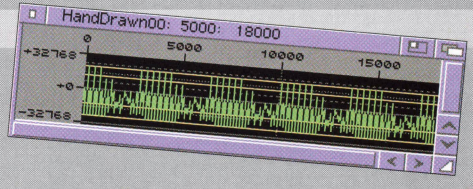
This short tutorial will take you through some of the most often used processes in SoundFX. It will work with the non-saving demo and doesn't require a sound card.



step 1

1. Load any short 16-bit sample, select a short section by drawing a rectangle on the wave with the mouse, and zero it (crossed-out loudspeaker in the tool bar) to give a blank area for drawing. Zoom in on the X axis using the = icon (zoom section of tool bar), then zoom a bit more. Pick the Trace mode (green circle with cross hairs) at the left end of the region-editing arrows in the tool bar. Draw a wave. Change from Trace to Mark Region (red arrow), select the wave, and Grab it (twin sheets of paper in tool bar) into a new window.

step 2



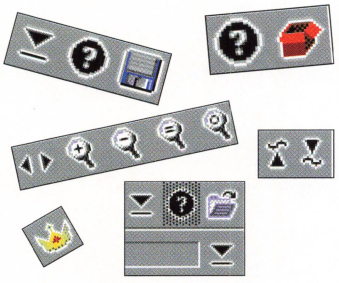
2. Apply the Duplicate operator to get a few hundred copies of the wave. The operators drop-down menu is in the middle at the top of the screen. If you have your Amiga's audio sockets connected to an amp and speakers, you can hear what you have done by hitting the space bar. Hit it again to stop. (Or use the player controls in the top bar).

as they are not identified (except in the Help files), they are too mysterious to be useful. Some more thought is needed here.

The top bar of the interface is divided into five sections. These are Load, Save, Operate, Run Script, and Play. In each case, there is a drop-down list, a question-mark symbol for options, and a "do it" icon. Even in 2001, the symbol for "Save" is still a picture of a floppy disk, while the symbol for "Open" is a folder from an office filing cabinet. Still, at least they work.

Normally, the 'Load' setting would be left on 'Universal', which automatically recognises the file type, even without any 3-letter extensions. The Raw and CDDA loaders have useful options, as do all the saver modules. It is best to check these to make sure that you are saving in exactly the format you want, and not, for instance, in 8 bit rather than 16. One limitation for loading and saving samples is that the program remembers only one path. It would be far more useful if it remembered two: one for loading and one for saving, to save navigating backwards and forwards all the time.

The Play section has a drop-down menu offering a choice of various Paula settings or AHI. If you use Paula, it is well worth spending the time to run the calibration program that comes with Play16. The resulting 14-bit sound is good enough to be useful for monitoring most of the operations you can do in SFX. Of course, a 16-bit sound card is better, but you are not totally lost without one.



Icon jungle: massive!

The first section on the second row of icons (on a 1024x768 screen) covers sample options. A drop-down menu contains a list of the samples currently loaded, whilst a question mark button reveals a detailed range of options for each, of which the most used will be 'Loop On/Off'. An icon of a red cardboard box allows you to hide the display window for that sample - useful if the screen is getting cluttered, or you are on AGA and running low on memory.

Now we get into the icon jungle: they look nice, but are confusing. The first batch is Cut, Copy, Paste, Erase, Grab, Zero and Overwrite. Four of these are pictures of clipboards and pieces of paper. A different order might help - Paste should perhaps be renamed Insert (because that's what it does) and placed next to Overwrite.

Likewise, Erase removes the samples in the marked region completely, so the whole sample becomes shorter in time, while Zero changes the marked area to a period of silence. Pictures of an eraser versus a loudspeaker with a cross over it don't really convey these ideas. Grab, meanwhile, makes a new sample containing just the marked region of the current sample (the new sample is opened in its own window). Again, a picture of two pieces of paper doesn't provide a good indication of what will happen.

I don't want to give the impression the GUI is unusable - you can learn it in a day - but if you then come back to it after a break, you will probably have to learn it all over again. A little more design work could make the program really user-friendly rather than just attractive to look at.

Looping the loop

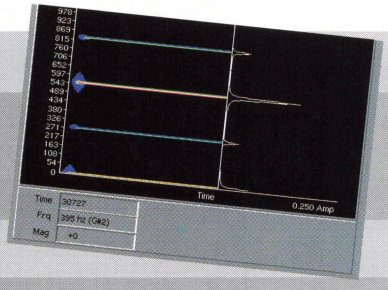
The next batch of buttons is for zooming. There is a toggle with options to zoom horizontally, vertically or both. Most of the time, you will only want to zoom in and out horizontally, with the vertical setting left to show the full height of the wave.

One of the most important features in a sample editor is being able to select a range from a sample easily. In SFX, the GUI control for doing this in a window is excellent. You can mark out an

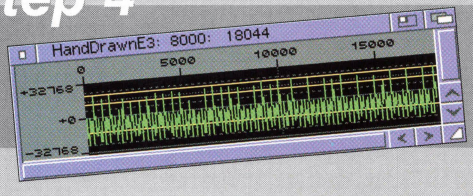
"A little more design work could make the program really user-friendly..."

step 3

3. Apply the Analyse-Spect2D operator to find out what pitch your wave is. Find a list of the frequencies of various notes.



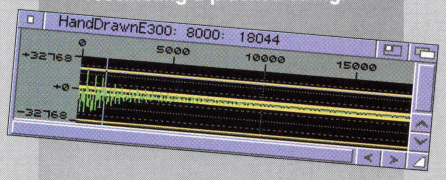
step 4



4. Use the Pitch Shift operator to convert your wave to 3 or 4 different notes in the same octave. If you don't have a list, just guess some numbers - it will sound more weird. Don't try to shift too far - values between .5 and 1.5 should be OK.

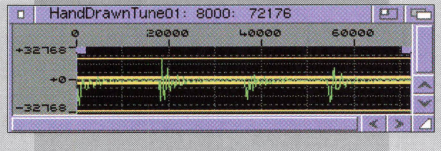
step 5

5. Apply the Amplify operator to each, using the Pluck preset. This should give a sound resembling a plucked string.



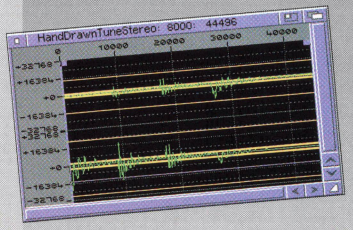
step 6

6. Use the SampleJoin operator to join them together in whatever order you want.



step 7

7. Apply the Panorama-2Ch operator to make a stereo pair. Edit out any over-long pauses between notes with Erase.



You should now have a fairly charming little melody.

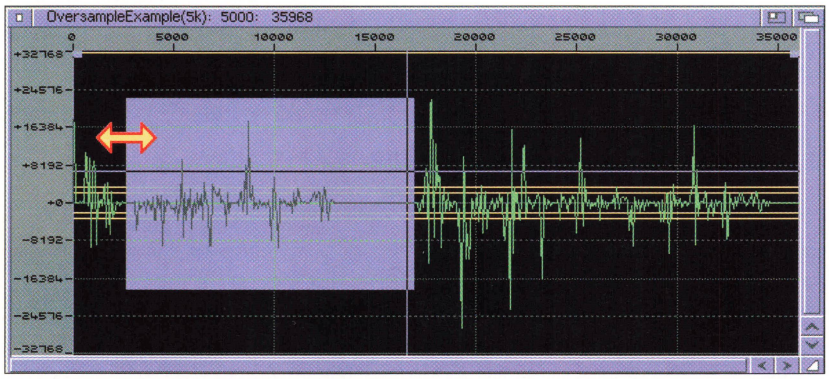
area by dragging with the mouse, then edit it by going near any of the four borders and dragging to enlarge or reduce. For more control, you can also use the standard keyboard Left-Amiga plus Cursor Keys combination.

The large number of arrow-like symbols in the toolbar gives further control of selection and zooming. There are four modes which are toggled with the first icon: Selected Area, Loop, Zoom and Trace.

You can move fast or slowly, to the beginning or end (or top or bottom) of the sample, or to the nearest zero-crossing point. This last option is essential for editing samples, as if you join two sections of audio together there will be an audible click if they meet at any value other than zero. So if, for instance, you want to cut a section from a sample, both ends of the selected range must be at a zero-crossing point. In SFX, this is easy to set.

The trace mode allows you to hand-edit fine detail in a sample. You have to zoom right in to a very high magnification, and can then draw in the sample window with the mouse. This could be used to remove a click, for instance, but it would take forever to remove lots of them. You can also hand-draw one cycle of a wave form, then use the Duplicate operator to make a few hundred repeats of it. A variety of buzzy synth noises can be created in this way.

Below: The selected range is shown in lilac (yes, you can change it!). The double-headed arrow is the mouse pointer moving the left hand edge.



The operators

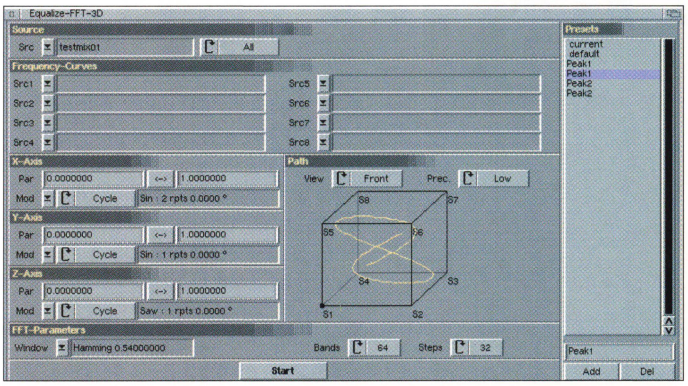
The operators are the meat of this program. While the editing facilities are excellent (barring the icon designs), the operators are exceptional and very impressive. There are 64 on offer, many of which would take months to explore fully, so we can only cover some of the highlights here.

The Amplify operator can be used to increase the levels of a quiet sample to fill the full 16-bit range by clicking 'Max Volume' (the equivalent of the Normalise function in other editors).

'Amplify' may seem like a simple operation without much creative potential, but in SFX, most operations can be modulated in many ways. So, you can amplify the sound by a varying amount. Its volume could go up and down according to a sine wave law, for example, which is the same effect as mixing in a low frequency oscillator in a synth. Or it can be set with one of the presets provided to diminish rapidly like a plucked string. Your hand-drawn waveform now becomes a useful steel guitar sound, and so on. This level of flexibility is everywhere.

The Analyse-Spectrum 2D operator doesn't change the sound but displays a coloured graph showing the amount of sound at each frequency at each moment during the time of the sample. This is all very high tech and pretty, but here's the clincher... when you move the mouse over the graph, a grid appears and the pitch of the sound can be measured. Decide which is the main frequency, and the note (such as C-3 for C in octave 3) is displayed. Now we have something very useful: the note can be set as the default pitch in OctaMED, or the pitch can be altered.

Below: Fast Fourier Transforms in 3D. Not for the faint-hearted.



> **"...all very high tech and pretty, but here's the clincher..."**

There is a good variety of delay operators: Delay, DelayPlus, MultiDelay, Echo, ChorusPhaser. Good settings for operators can be saved as presets.

An additive synth and an FM synth are provided. In the additive synth, the overtones are set with sliders which are rather hard to see until you fiddle with the palette. Modulating the main frequency with a low frequency has the same effect as an LFO in a standard synth. The volume level can be modulated too.

Finally, the batch processor allows you to apply any sequence of operators to a whole drawer full of samples. Normalisation and file format conversion are obvious uses for batch processing.

Conclusions

Sound FX provides a very impressive set of tools for creating and changing sound samples. The new GUI is good but could use a little more work, as could the virtual memory feature. Yet again, a solitary Amiga programmer has produced a program which is competitive with those produced by large teams on other platforms.

It appears likely that SoundFX will work well on the AmigaOne, and in conjunction with ProStation Audio, a revised Bars & Pipes, and maybe a revised OctaMED, will form part of a useful music studio. The main thing still lacking is a sequencer using 16-bit samples, but this will surely appear, perhaps as an enhancement to Bars & Pipes. Then, SFX will be particularly useful for editing the samples.

Don Cox A

SoundFX

SYSTEM: **Any Amiga with OS 3.0 or later. Faster processors and more RAM will help.**

SUMMARY: **Impressive and very comprehensive program from a dedicated programmer. Definitely recommended.**

Name PlexWriter 16/10/40A
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PlexWriter 16/10/40A

CD writers keep getting faster, but is this 16x one worth bothering with?

This new CD rewriter from Plextor is available in IDE only. Previous Plextor drives had SCSI versions too. This doesn't bode well for Amiga users, whose IDE interfaces are much older and slower than those of PCs, but the only way to tell for sure was to give it a spin.

The drive is available in both "OEM" (Originating Equipment Manufacturer) and "Retail" versions, as with most CD writers. The OEM version is intended for PC builders and consists of just the bare drive. We were sent the retail version that included mounting screws, cables and a CD of drivers and software for Windows. OEM versions cost less and are the best choice for any drive for use on an Amiga.

Installing the drive was as simple as turning off our A4000, removing the existing IDE CD-ROM and replacing it with the Plextor. Connect the cables, turn it back on and... nothing! Turn off, recheck all connections, turn on again, but still no joy - just some brief hard drive activity and a black screen. Adding "SKIPROMUPDATES scsi.device" to the SetPatch line in Startup-Sequence cured this problem. Owners of 4-way IDE interfaces may already have this, but it appears this drive doesn't like the OS 3.9 scsi.device even when used on the standard interface.

How fast is fast?

This is not a true 16x drive, the write speed varies from 12x on the inner portions of the disk to 16x at the outer edge, taking advantage of the faster speed of the disc surface towards the edge. Our A4000's IDE interface was unable to keep up with even 12x, let alone 16x. Reading from a source on a SCSI drive, either an image file or on-the-fly, the write process in MakeCD maintained a constant 10.9x. Writing from an image file on an IDE drive connected to the same interface gave a write speed of 6.3x. Trying the drive on a PC with a fast IDE interface showed that this drive does indeed reach speeds of between 12x and 16x.

The 16/10/40A uses the same BURN-Proof system as the 12x SCSI drive reviewed in issue 7. This prevents buffer underruns from ruining CDs when the computer is unable to supply data fast enough for the writer. It pauses the writing process just before the buffer runs out and restarts after the buffer has had a chance to fill. BURN-Proof worked perfectly, even though the Amiga was supplying data at around half the speed that the drive needed, the CD was burnt perfectly. We copied 600MB of LhA archives and tested several of the copied files. Even one corrupted byte would have shown an error, but there were none.

It's hard to recommend this drive for use with an Amiga, however. It is a good drive, but a standard Amiga IDE interface simply cannot keep up. 16x burning requires a total of around 5.5MB/s to handle both reading from the source and writing to the CD. A PowerFlyer or IDEplus IDE interface should be able to keep up. This is a drive that cries out for SCSI, yet Plextor don't have a SCSI version. They don't even make an external USB unit in icky blue, so Mac users are left out in the cold too.

Neil Bothwick A



Software

There used to be three CD burning programs for the Amiga, but MasterISO is no longer developed and BurnIT appears to have fallen by the wayside, so we are left with just the one: MakeCD. Fortunately, this is a solid piece of software that is still being updated.

The latest public beta of MakeCD has added support for creating VideoCDs. Most, if not all, new CD-R and CDRW drives use the standard MMC command set, so there is no need to update the software each time a new drive is released. MakeCD's internal drive list is added to each time a new version is released, but the generic SCSI/ATAPI driver works with all the new drives we've tried. This means the limited time currently available for development is used for adding new features, such as VCD.

PlexWriter 16/10/40A

SYSTEM: Any Amiga with a fast IDE interface and plenty of RAM.

SUMMARY: A good drive, but the Amiga, with its slow IDE interface, really needs a SCSI version.



Multi Session CDs

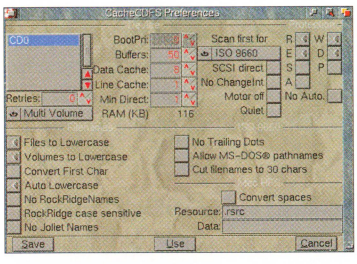
Creating multi-session CDs is easy, if you know how. It isn't if you don't. So here's how...

Since we used a multi-session format for AACDs 17 to 20, we have been asked many questions about multi-sessions CDs: what are they, how can you read them, how do you make them?

Data CDs are normally created with all the files and directories in a single track. Once the files are written the disc is "fixed", which writes a table of contents (TOC) to the disc. A CD-ROM drive uses the TOC to find out what's where on the disc - only a CD writer can read an unfixed disc. Sometimes, you want to write some files to a disc and then add some more later (for keeping digital camera pictures on CD, for example). Unless you are a very prolific photographer, you won't want to wait until you have 650MB of images before burning a CD. This is easy with audio, as each song is a separate track anyway, but CD filesystems expect all the data to be on one track.

Multi-session or multi-volume?

If you write the first batch of files and fix the session, you will be able to read those files. If you later add another batch of files and fix again (either session or disc) you'll probably find you can only read the second batch. You have created a multi-volume CD. This is like a hard drive with multiple partitions, and your filesystem can only read one partition. CacheCDFS has an option to read multi-volume discs. Enable this and you'll get a requester asking which track you want to mount.



Left: CacheCDFS can be told to read multi-volume or multi-session CDs.

What happened to the first batch of files? They're still there but the new TOC now lists just the second batch. To create a multi-session disc that shows all files from both sessions at once, you need to link the tracks. This is how you do it in MakeCD.

Create the first track with the first batch of files, and fix the session. When you want to add more you don't need to load the old MakeCD project, you can start with an empty track list. Create a new track, set the source to "File system" in the "Track Options" window and open

> **"...it is important that you add tracks in the right order."**

the "ISO image prefs" window as you would for any data track.

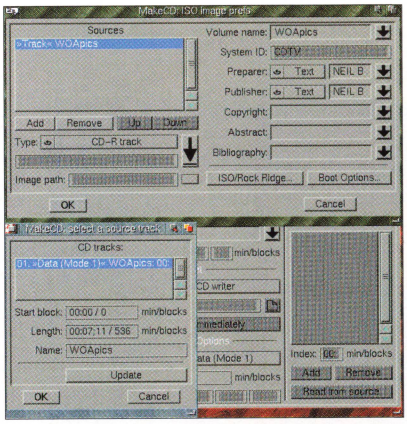
Before you select the new batch of files to add, click the Add button, set the cycle gadget to "CD-R track" and press the big arrow gadget. Select the previous track from the window that opens. Now click Add again and add your new batch of files.

By adding the previous track to the new one, you create links from the TOC of the new track to the contents of the old one. To the filesystem, the two tracks appear as one. If you have a file in the new track with the same path and name as one in the old track, the old file will effectively overwritten (the old file will still be on the CD but the TOC will point to the new one). So it is important that you add tracks in the right order.

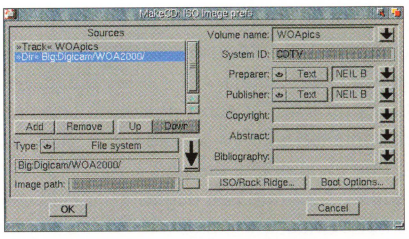
If you don't want to overwrite any files, tick the "Image path" box in the ISO Image Prefs window and add a directory name for each track. This will put each batch of files in its own directory, avoiding any name clashes.

You can add as many data tracks to a multi-session CD as you like, until you fix the disc. When adding third and subsequent tracks, you don't need to include all previous tracks. Only select the one before, as that already contains links to the previous tracks.

Neil Bothwick A



Above: Before adding the new data, add the previous track from the CD-R.



Above: Now the CD-R has two tracks, written separately but appearing as one.

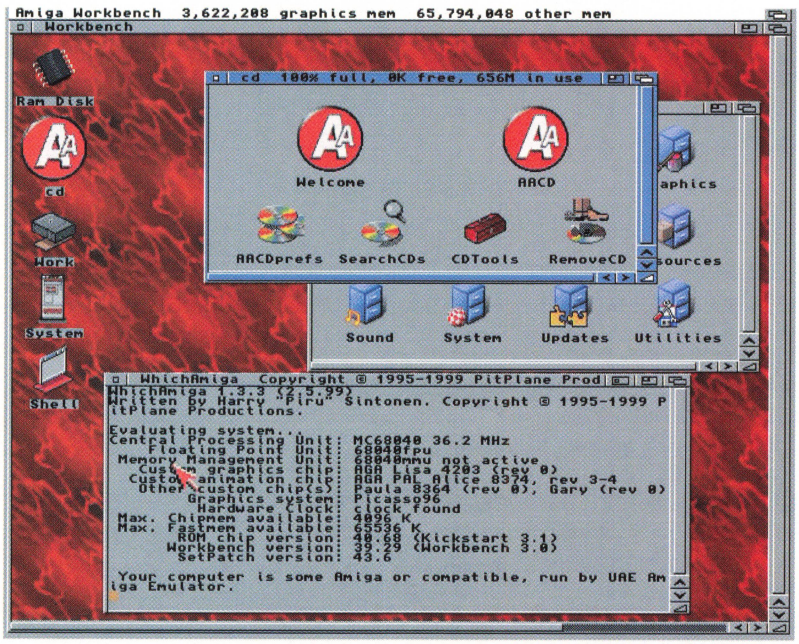
MINI-TIP!

Finally, a tip on finding information in MakeCD's documentation, or any other AmigaGuide file: use SearchGuide, from the Resources/General/SearchGuide drawer of our coverdisc, to add a Search button to the contents page of any AmigaGuide file. You can then search that guide for any word or phrase.

Name WinUAE v0.8.16 rel. 4
Developer Brain King, Bernd Scmidt, Bernd Mayer et al.
Price Freely distributable under GPL
Info www.codepoet.com

Unusable No More

WinUAE has finally become really useable - just in time!



Using UAE

UAE for *nix can be a little tricky to use. You'll end up applying patches, compiling source and feeding in command line operators. WinUAE is much easier, installing under any version of Windows and offering a nice GUI. To make the emulation work you'll need an Amiga ROM image, and a virtual disk to boot from. This can be an autobooting game in the form of an ADF file, an ADF Workbench disk, or a virtual hard drive. UAE can use either Hard Disk image Files (HDF) or can mirror part of the Windows file tree as a hard drive - an easier but slightly slower method. The ROM image can be copied across from your Amiga (remember you only have one license for that ROM, so you can't use it on more than one computer at a time). The other, easier, method is to buy it. Cloanto's Amiga Forever comes

A long, long time ago, a guy called Bernd Schmidt wrote an Amiga Emulator for Unix. Logically, it was called Unix Amiga Emulator, or UAE for short (not to be confused with the United Arab Emirates). Many people felt a more accurate title might have been Unusable Amiga Emulator, as it was very, very slow, missed a lot of features and broke. Frequently.

Over time, UAE improved. A few years back it acquired AGA emulation, enabling it to emulate more games; and Picasso 96, making it much nicer for use with productivity applications. It also got BSD emulation, allowing emulated programs access to Windows' TCP stack to connect to the Internet.

The big step

These improvements moved UAE from being a way to play old Amiga games on the office PC to a really quite usable emulated environment, no worse than a rather low-end A1200. An emulated environment works very differently to a real Amiga so it's difficult to compare performance - for example, disk access would often be much faster on the emulated machine because PCs often have faster disk access than Amigas, while software that demands heavy CPU work would be much slower. From a subjective view, the general consensus was that in Picasso mode on a good PC, it was a bit like using a 25Mhz '030 Amiga.

Early this year, UAE saw a radical change. A developer called Bernd Meyer produced a patch for UAE that uses a JIT (Just In Time - see boxout) compilation engine to increase speed. This was no normal speed-up patch but an entirely new emulation core that produces major improvements. Finally the patch has made it into Brian King's WinUAE, beta version 0.8.16 release 4.

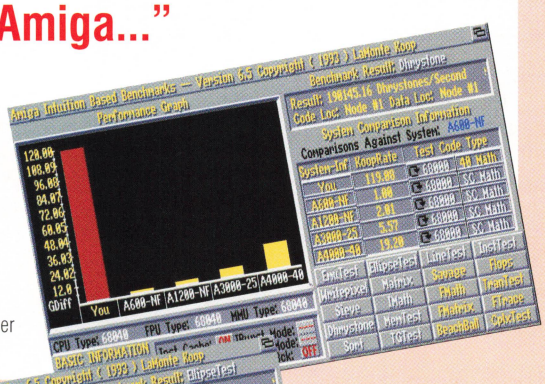
"So is it fast? Yes. Very. Blisteringly."

So is it fast? Yes. Very. Blisteringly. For reasons listed above there's no direct comparison for how fast it is, but for many functions, particularly those using heavy CPU work, the JIT version can be several times faster than the previous non-JIT version. The combination of two factors - the improvement in CPU technology and this new JIT engine add up to something new in the Amiga world - emulation can be faster than the real thing.

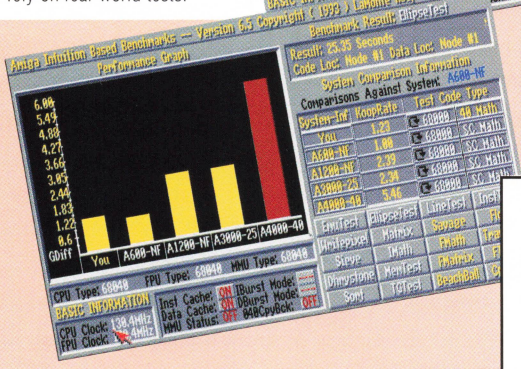
Room for improvement

While the emulation is extremely good, it's not perfect. Sound handling in particular tends to be problematic - it will be nice when the UAE AHI driver is ready. Another flaw with the current WinUAE release is the broken BSD socket emulation - a major limitation, but one which should be fixed soon. There's also an obscure memory leak bug in the JIT engine, particularly on low-memory systems.

"It doesn't quite feel like using an Amiga..."



Right: Benchmarking emulators is notoriously difficult, and JIT compilation exacerbates the problem. Major discrepancies can be caused by minor tweaks to the JIT handling. We'd rather rely on real-world tests.

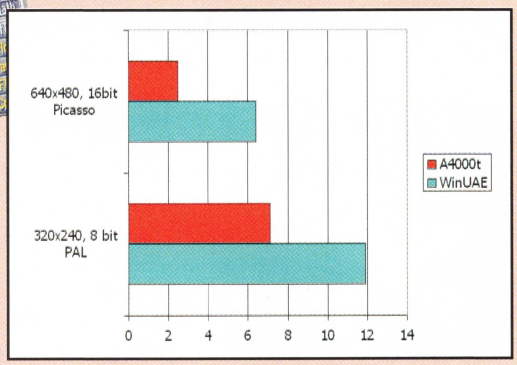


with a licensed ROM. It also comes up with bootable virtual hard drive partitions to give you a pre-installed Workbench with Picasso96 support, which makes installation an awful lot easier. However using the Windows file tree for a hard drive enabled me to copy my Workbench folder across from my Amiga to my PC, where with a bit of editing of the startup-sequence it booted UAE fine.

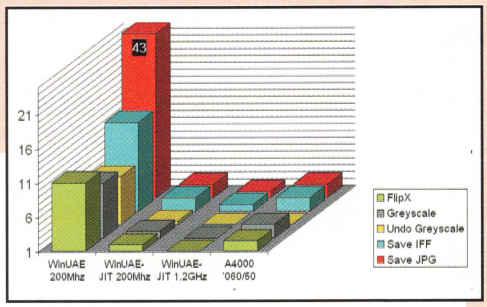
Just in Time

Normally an emulator reads the program it has been asked to execute and interprets it into instructions that the host machine can understand as it goes along. This is quite a slow process. Just in Time compilation uses high-speed compiler methods to compile the program to the host instruction set in chunks. Improvements in compiler design and processor speed make compiling much less of a time overhead, thus making the trade-off for increased efficiency well worth it. The advantage of JIT compiling varies according to how well the compiler can produce efficient native code from the instructions it is converting. In some instances the converted code will approach native speeds, in others it won't be much faster.

UAE uses Bernie Mayer's 68k to x86 JIT engine, the Everton release with the Ipswich Town service pack - a nomenclature inspired by Amiga's Zico specification perhaps? This same engine has now been used in Christian Bauer's Basilisk II 68k Macintosh emulator to similarly good effect.



Left: The faithful Quake demo 1 frame per second test, run straight from the original ClickBOOM disc with no tweaks or optimisations. The UAE box has a 1200MHz AMD Thunderbird CPU and a high-end AGP graphics card, the A4000t has a 50Mhz Motorola 68060 CPU and a Zorro 3 Cybervision 64/3D graphics card.



Left: Time taken to perform tasks on a test image in Image Studio, in seconds. The tall column at the back is 43 seconds. The columns with no height represent times less than one second and considered too short to measure.

This is a measure of system performance not just CPU emulation - the advantage the fastest UAE test has over the A4000 is caused by the slower screen redraws and hard drive performance.

Other than that, the accuracy of the emulation is impressive. It is by no means foolproof; some pieces of software just seem to refuse to work, while others, which might be considered very testing candidates, worked fine. The Tales from Heaven demo didn't open a screen, for example, but many hardware-bashing AGA demos run just fine.

Another area of incompatibility is hardware. The Amiga's serial port is implemented differently to standard PC serial ports, and the emulated serial port can suffer timing issues noticeable in MIDI use. The Amiga floppy drive is functionally different to a PC floppy drive, so you can't read Amiga disks. There are two solutions to this problem - the first is to use the ADF (Amiga Disk Files) format, which is a disk image format readable by UAE as if it were a floppy disk; the second, the ISA Catweasel board that allows Amiga floppy drives to be attached to PCs. Finally, of course, you can't run PowerPC software under UAE.

Faster than a speeding '060

So how does it compare to the real thing? Is it truly the Usable Amiga Emulator? The short answer is yes, particularly on a modern high-end PC, although it'll do a decent job even on something relatively slow. It doesn't quite feel like using an Amiga because there's a different balance of things it's good at (drawing menus or opening windows seems appreciably slower than most other tasks under UAE, while functions such as screen drawing and file access that use the PC's hardware will be a lot faster if your hardware is).

I decided a while back that I'd be happy with the state of Amiga emulation when I could run Scopex's 1000% 40k demo smoothly, and now I can. I'm not retiring my Amiga until the emulation becomes significantly more stable, but the idea of a laptop with a minimal Linux install auto-booting into UAE sounds rather tempting to me right now!

Andrew Korn A

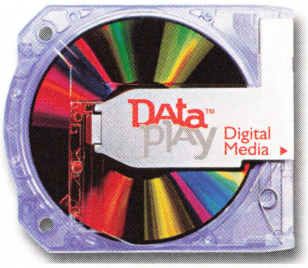
WEB *LINKS*

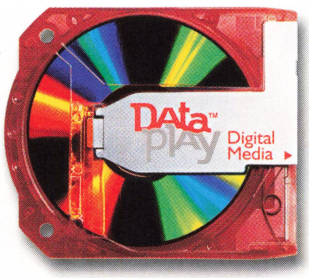
UAE web site:
www.freiburg.linux.de/~uae
WinUAE web site:
www.codepoet.com/UAE/
Amiga Forever web site:
www.cloanto.com/amiga/forever
UAE-JIT web site:
http://byron.csse.monash.edu.au/uaejit.html

NextGen Watch

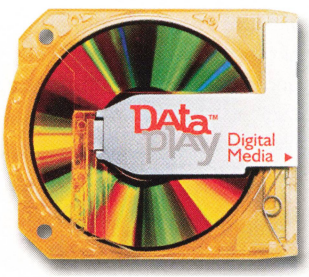
With the Amiga Digital Environment promising a ubiquitous content layer across a number of digital devices, we'll need somewhere equally pervasive to store all our files...

ACTUAL SIZE









"a universal media for everything digital."

The matter of data management was somewhat less demanding a couple of decades ago. Loading a game on your ZX Spectrum was simply a matter of inserting a tape and pressing the play button, whilst protecting your BBC Micro's documents from deletion on 5.25" floppy disks involved merely putting a sticker over a hole in the thin black casing. How times have changed.

Like it or not, we're living in an age where digital information is everywhere. Unfortunately, that information resides on all manner of devices and in a multitude of different formats. The hassle involved in transferring files between the relatively few operating systems (Amiga to PC, PC to Mac, Mac to Amiga) can be frustrating enough - so what are we going to do when we have mobile phones, PDAs, laptops, desktops, audio players, digital cameras, video cameras (digital video cameras...) and however many other devices all wanting to record and exchange data with one another? Sound confusing? You bet it does!

Rather than transferring files from our desktops onto memory cards for our phones, MP3 players or palmtops, wouldn't it be nicer to have one portable, universal, secure read/write medium for all devices? Of course it would. Enter Boulder, Colorado-based DataPlay, a relatively young technology company with a vision of creating, *"a universal media for everything digital."*

Physical

Height	3.05mm
Width	39.53mm
Length	39.5mm
Weight	3.5g
Media Diameter	52mm
Media Thickness	0.6mm

Content is Key

"DataPlay was founded in November 1998," explains the company's VP of Marketing, Ray Uhlir. *"Our mission is to identify and meet consumer and industry needs by creating lasting media solutions that simplify and standardize the delivery and management of all digital content. There is definitely a need for a media that is universal, portable and affordable and that allows people to access all of their favourite content anytime and anywhere."*

If you think you've heard that somewhere before, it's because you have - DataPlay see themselves as being to storage media what Java is to programming, or Tao Group's intent is to content. They're well on the way, too, having already raised $64 million in investment funding from such well-known companies as Samsung, Imation, Toshiba, Universal Music Group, SonicBlue and Creative: confirming the industry's support for their fledgling technology. But DataPlay is about more than a new type of disc for storing digital information.

"DataPlay is not a media storage company and DataPlay digital media is far more than just a storage media," explains Ray. *"DataPlay is a universal media solution and content access company. Our engines, media, and ContentKey technologies will enable new levels of device functionality and content access that are unavailable today. With DataPlay, consumers will be able to take hundreds of high resolution photos on a DataPlay enabled digital camera and then insert the same piece of DataPlay media into a cell phone to e-mail a photo to a friend or download music onto the same media.*

"ContentKey also allows content on demand, where consumers can activate content permanently over the web. This opens new distribution models for publishers and will provide greater flexibility for the consumer."

Smaller, better?

DataPlay discs are minuscule by Compact Disc standards, yet can hold almost as much data - up to 500MB at the present time - but how do they compare to other compact forms of data storage like solid state memory cards?







"DataPlay discs are minuscule by CD standards, yet can hold almost as much data..."

Above & Right: Toshiba's forthcoming digital camera and audio player, both with built-in DataPlay functionality.



"Solid state media has its place in certain applications and DataPlay actually compliments it," Ray told *Amiga Active*. *"However, its affordability will never reach the level of DataPlay, and there is a technological limit with how far solid state memory can go down in price. Right now, solid state is approximately $2-$3 per megabyte compared to approximately $0.02/MB for DataPlay.*

"Solid state is only readily available to the consumer in 128MB and 256MB maximum capacities and does not lend itself to mastering of pre-recorded content like DataPlay's optical technology. DataPlay, meanwhile, will continue to increase into the several Gigabyte range over time and will outpace solid state memory in both capacity and affordability."

Integration

So, DataPlay discs are both small and affordable - but they're discs, all the same. Expecting manufacturers to incorporate disc drives into portable devices is asking the impossible, surely? Aren't wireless technologies, and the concept of the home server, going to make DataPlay's technology redundant?

"Absolutely not. In fact, DataPlay is a perfect fit for wireless devices. Bluetooth will assist with wireless connectivity but distance limits, power, and bandwidth issues with Bluetooth will still require there to be some form of digital media for content buffering, recording, archiving, and access to all forms of digital content without limits. DataPlay micro-optical engines are about the size of a matchbox and will support wireless applications such as mobile phones and wireless PDAs. The micro-optical engine is not bulky and has very low power consumption ideally suited for battery operated portable devices.

"DataPlay is focused initially on the consumer market; however, in the near future, we see DataPlay digital media extending to many commercial applications. Of course, the media offers archivability for data backup, but its high data transfer rate also makes it ideally suited for kiosk applications which dispense custom content. For example, users can create custom albums, and download magazines and newspapers.

"Amiga has a loyal following, and we hope to have support for Amiga in the future..."

Ray Uhlir, Dataplay's VP of Marketing.

"Our ContentKey activation technology allows for distribution of all types of consumer or commercial content which can be activated on the media via purchase, or for free at a later date. Portable data entry devices which are commonly used in commercial applications could use DataPlay digital media for data transfer or access to key information such as maps, instructions, databases and so on."

Potential

So what does the future hold for DataPlay? With CDs having established themselves in the audio market and DVDs finally achieving a firm foothold in the video arena, when - and where - will we start to see DataPlay discs being used? The first line of products - 250MB and 500MB discs, along with several OEM devices with integrated DataPlay capability - are scheduled to ship by the end of the year. Toshiba are just one of the companies who are developing Dataplay-enabled products such as a digital camera and music player (pictured).

"DataPlay is currently working with over 50 different OEM device manufacturers to integrate DataPlay functionality into devices in the music, imaging, computing, wireless, e-book, and game categories. Many of these devices will be available in the 4th Quarter.

"Every DataPlay device is also both a player and a recorder and the digital media is readable and writeable. DataPlay essentially gives you a CD burner in every device and does it with one media. DataPlay also already has the support of major content providers in music/entertainment and e-Books. DataPlay digital media will have content from Universal Music, EMI, and BMG and will also have e-Books from Rosetta Books. We are in discussions with other content providers.

"DataPlay digital media is easily mastered with content and supports high volume manufacturing and replication just like CD and DVD for audio and video. Consumers will have music videos on pre-recorded music selections on DataPlay near launch, but DataPlay can also support full-length movies within 500MB using formats such as MPEG-4. Over time, as DataPlay increases capacity it will provide video capability identical to DVD and also be suited for home theatre as well as portable applications.

"When you combine these benefits with the ability to also use the media as digital film in cameras and use the same media in your PC, handheld, or other device, the value proposition becomes far greater than CD, DVD, MiniDisc, Solid State or other media formats."

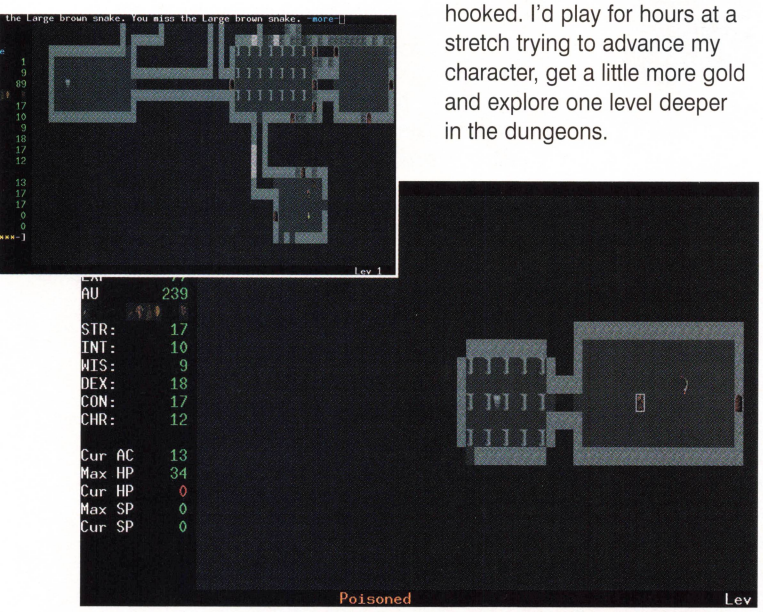
With all this potential, *Amiga Active* would be surprised if we weren't working on an interactive, multimedia DataPlay edition of our back issues CD - possibly even the magazine itself - in a few years time. A

Active Shareware

Mailing, Multi-booting, Moria and er... MEnv-Handler. Look, it's got a silent "M". Honest.

On a role

The Amiga has been blessed with some great games over the years, but the game that I played the most wasn't Elite or Lemmings or Civilization - it was Moria. An RPG inspired by table-top role-playing games with terribly crude graphics and probably quite repetitive game play, Moria nonetheless had me hooked. I'd play for hours at a stretch trying to advance my character, get a little more gold and explore one level deeper in the dungeons.



Above: Curse that white jelly! Poisoned! I'll get you in another life...

"...see what games used to look like in the days before polygon pushing..."

Alas, Moria has passed into the mists of time, but Angband - a derivative - is still under constant development. Angband itself has spawned dozens of variants, each with subtle differences in gameplay or features. Many of these variants have been ported to the Amiga.

Perhaps the most popular variant of Angband is Zangband (see www.zangband.org) which shifts the game world from Middle Earth to the world of Amber (from Roger Zelazny's novels) and offers quite a departure in gameplay.

Rather than just being a straight Rogue descendent, Zangband is a bit like a cross between Moria and Ultima III. The world of Zangband is split into different realms. Moreover, there are set quests, many new monsters and objects and completely rewritten rules for combat and magic.

Development of Zangband for the Amiga keeps relatively close to the cutting edge. The newest stable version for DOS and Windows is 2.6.0, while the Amiga is lagging just one step behind at the unstable 2.5.6 release. The Amiga port has fairly good support for graphics and sound, too.

You can still play in text-only mode in a console if you really want to, but in graphical mode it's much more pleasant to look at - and easier to tell what things are!

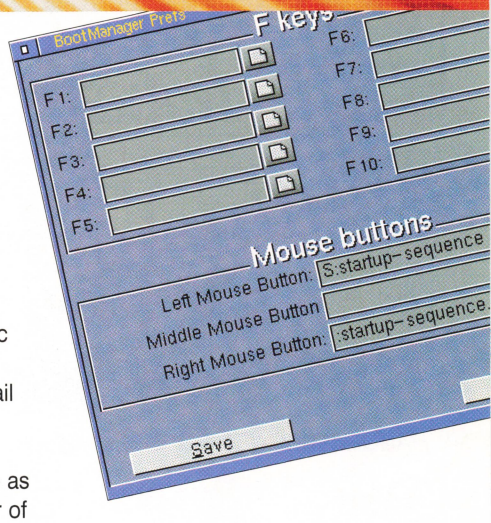
Amiga Zangband supports playing in the current screen mode or on the custom screen of your choice and offers a multi-windowed display, although with Picasso96, it locked up the machine every time. The only way it would work was to choose a native chipset mode and promote to a Picasso screen with ModePro. I suspect it's not too keen on chunky bitmaps.

Zangband is well worth a look for any Amiga gamer, if only to see what games used to look like in the days before polygon pushing. It might have a steep learning curve, but if you persevere and learn how to survive in the harsh world of Amber, you see that this is an incredibly addictive game with a whole online culture that you can take part in.

Better than Ha

Hands up those who use HappyEnv, the fantastic little bit of software for speeding up your Amiga and reducing memory consumption. It's so breath-takingly elegant and simple you wish you'd thought of it yourself.

HappyEnv creates a minimal filesystem in memory purely for storing environment variables and prefs settings - rather than storing them on the RAM disk.

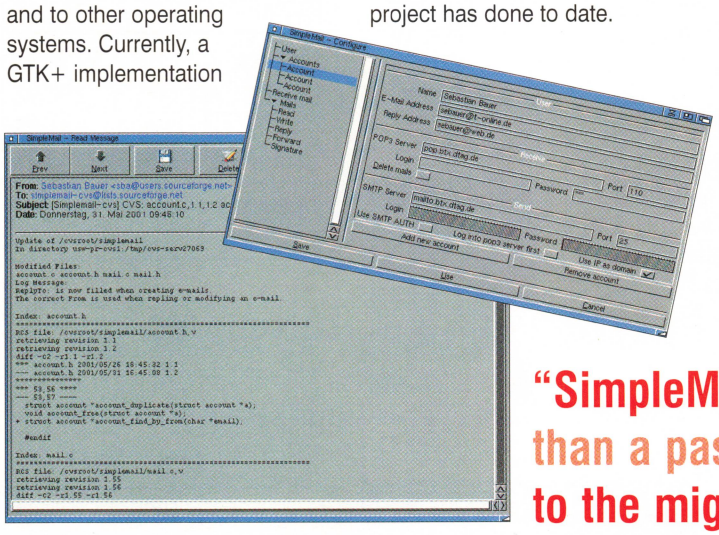


New mailer on the block

A contender is emerging for YAM's crown as the top Amiga e-mail package. The new SimpleMail (http://simplemail.sourceforge.net) is still at the alpha testing stage, but more and more features are being added with each release. The latest version, 0.6, is even complete enough to use for day-to-day mailing - if you are willing to risk an application this raw.

SimpleMail bears more than a passing resemblance to the mighty YAM, also being realized with MUI and having a similar interface layout. The principal differences at the moment lie behind the scenes. SimpleMail has been designed to be portable to different GUI toolkits and to other operating systems. Currently, a GTK+ implementation for Unix platforms is being experimented with, but there's no reason why it can't be ported to use Reaction on the classic Amiga, to Morphos, or even to (bleugh!) Windows.

The developers say that the aim for SimpleMail is to create a mailer that is as functional as YAM, but without the bugs and with many more extra features. Seems a worthy goal to me. What's more, SimpleMail is open source, so if you want to join in the development, go to the web site to find out how to lend a hand. Of course, YAM is now open source, too, but the SimpleMail project was initiated before this was the case. And SimpleMail has made more end-user releases than the YAM project has done to date.



The current release of SimpleMail has most of the features you'll need for basic mailing. It supports multiple POP3 accounts, multiple mail folders, filtering, MIME, an address book and so on. Although not yet as capable as YAM, it does have a number of big improvements, including the ability to sort and display messages in a folder by thread (a feature YAM users will turn green with envy over) and the ability to convert mails to HTML for display in the Read Message window.

This latter feature may not seem like much, but it makes controlling the display format for a mail much easier, and will make it simple for the developers to later implement support for HTML mails and the inline-display of attachments such as images.

It also makes the handling of links much more transparent. Currently SimpleMail ships with minimal documentation, but it is fairly intuitive to use. After all, if you can use one mail client, you can use them all.

"SimpleMail bears more than a passing resemblance to the mighty YAM..."

A la carte

An Amiga - despite the ageing hardware - has several advantages over the standard WIntel PC. One of these is the Early Startup Screen which is built into the Amiga Kernel ROM. This provides the user with the ability, amongst other things, to select a boot device from the list of devices available which are flagged as bootable. Your average PC BIOS won't let you do that. You'll need to install some kind of boot menu, such as LILO or System Commander.

If you want even more flexibility in booting your Amiga, BootManager might be the tool for you. It installs a command in your startup-sequence that checks for a key (or mouse button) press during boot-up, and launches a different startup-sequence according to the settings you have chosen. Configured with a simple MUI prefs editor, it allows you to specify over a dozen different startup sequences - a default one (for no action) and ones for each of the mouse buttons and function keys.

BootManger is perfect if you want to set up different working environments on your machine without having to set up separate partitions. Or perhaps you want to boot quickly into an operating system other than AmigaOS such as ShapeShifter or Linux. Not a problem: BootManager will let you do this simply and without fuss.

Richard Drummond A

ppy?

When you boot your machine, you no longer need to mirror the permanent copy of these settings from ENVARC: on your hard disk to ENV: on your RAM disk. HappyEnv automatically looks in ENVARC: for files that can't be found in memory. Your machine boots up more quickly, since that lengthy copy operation is not required, and memory consumption is - sometimes greatly - reduced.

The problem with HappyEnv is it's rather buggy and it hasn't seen an update in years. Luckily, Stephan Rupprecht has reimplemented the idea, using C rather than assembly language. Hopefully this means that the process should be more maintainable and robust. Env-handler, as his version is called, can be found at http://home.wtal.de/stephanr/. The latest version is 1.8, which corrects some of the bugs present in earlier releases. Download and install it now!

"If you want even more flexibility in booting your Amiga..."

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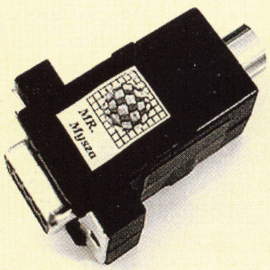
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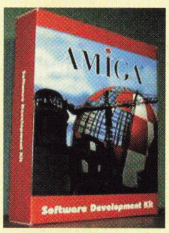


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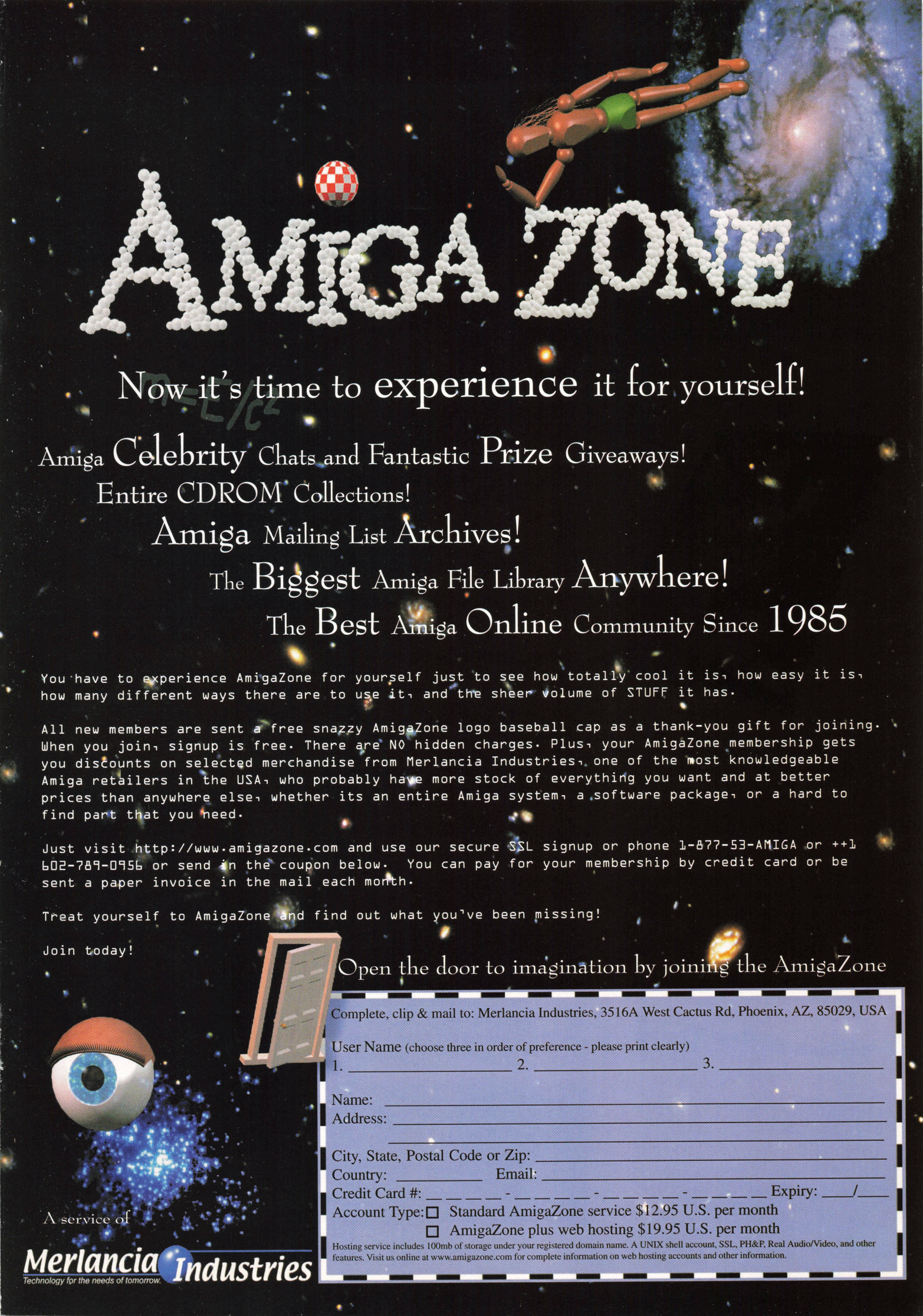
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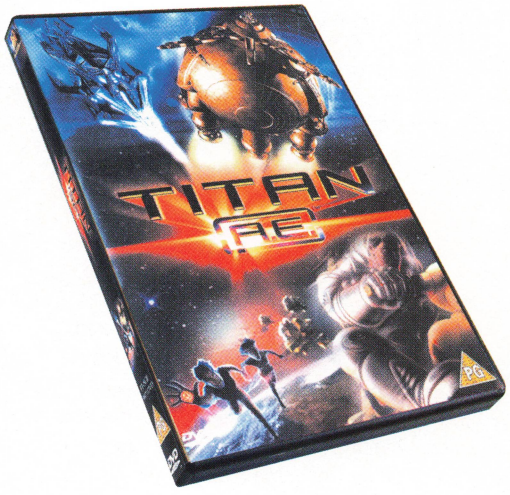
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Active Media

Our regular media round-up takes in animated spaceships, interface design and a sort of DIY superstore for webmasters.



TitanAE

- Region 2 DVD
- Publisher: Warner Brothers
- Price: £17.99

TitanAE is the most expensive animated movie ever made. It was also one of the biggest box-office flops, and took Fox Animation Studios down with it. It's easy to see why it was a failure - both in terms of the huge amount of expense that went into making it and the lack of any serious blockbuster credentials - but offered a chance to prove itself once more on DVD (and VHS, but this is just the sort of thing you want DVD for, let's face it), it's time for a reassessment.

"...this is just the sort of thing you want DVD for, let's face it..."

Titan After Earth, to give it its full title, is set a decade and a half after the destruction of our planet at the hands of an evil alien race. The plot concerns an attempt by a disparate band of humans who escaped Earth's destruction, aided by a small menagerie of odd aliens, to recover the Titan spacecraft, a vast ship that has the power to bring humanity back from the brink of extinction.

The cast of characters owes more than a nod to the traditional post-Star Wars space opera medley, with young dreamer hero, feisty female lead and cynical starship captain accompanied by comedy alien sidekicks. The plot is largely identikit space-faring with ominous bad-guys, narrow escapes, obligatory rescue missions, acts of redemption and so on. It has its redeeming features though - a few interesting characters (notably the alien hero/villain Preed), an unusually cynical edge and some solid genre-busting gags.

There's simply no doubt that the star of this movie is the animation. Character animation is of the high quality we've come to expect from Don Bluth, while the computer generated environments are often nothing short of breathtaking. The movie opens with the end of the Earth, accompanied by hundreds of beautifully rendered vehicles, and passes through an exciting chase scene amongst an alien forest of hydrogen balloon trees and a spectacular spaceship hide-and-seek in a belt of giant ice crystals, an effect that would simply not be feasible without CGI.

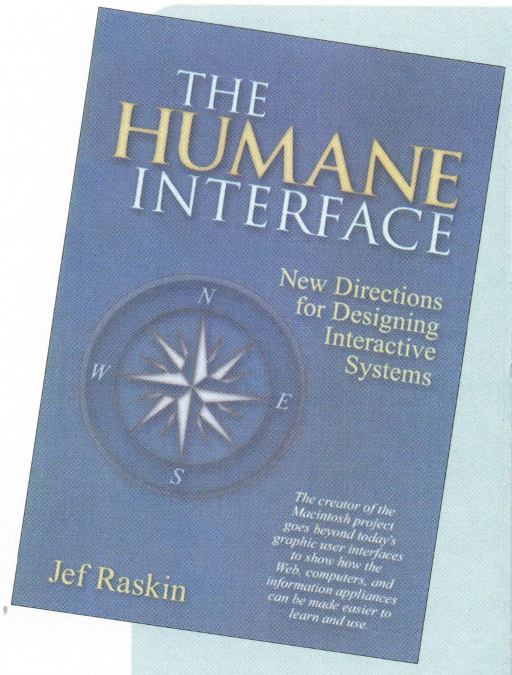
If you're expecting a sci-fi masterpiece to rival Brazil or Bladerunner you won't have





much joy, but if you don't mind the odd bit of old-fashioned space opera and have a thing for quality animation, you'll find this a more than worthy - and often simply spectacular - addition to your DVD collection.

Andrew Korn





Surfing in the fast lane

- Web site
- www.adslguide.org.uk

Are you thinking about a broadband Internet connection? Are you confused by all the options, rumours and hype, and having trouble telling which is which? ADSLguide.org.uk is an independent site for those using or considering ADSL in the UK. The site contains news, information, software updates and a number of message forums. These forums include discussions with various ADSL providers. There is also a comprehensive list of ADSL ISPs, listing the services each provides along with costs and links to their home pages. Similar resources for cable modems are available at www.cable-modems.co.uk.

CDs galore

- Web site
- www.cdnow.com

Why would you want to buy CDs or DVDs from the USA? They cost less, titles are available earlier, or you might live in the USA! CDNow is a well organised site with a comprehensive range of CDs. It even includes a guided tour of the site for new users. Very often a web designer adds useful touches to a site that are rarely used, so the guided tour is a good idea.

You can download or listen to clips from CDs (in a choice of RealAudio, Windows Media or MPEG formats), only the latter being usable on an Amiga. As well as being more compatible, the MPEG clips are also recorded at higher quality.

Web resources

- Web site
- www.boogiejack.com

The introduction to this site says *"Boogie Jack's Web Depot is a webmasters resource site with over 500 pages of free high quality web page graphics, HTML and CSS tutorials, graphics tutorials, cut and paste JavaScript, sound effects, software and software reviews, computer tips and more."* There isn't much more to add, except, 'it does exactly what it says on the tin.' This really is a comprehensive source of tutorials, reviews, files and other information for web page creators - and if you haven't got time to scour the web site, you can get your tips via a monthly newsletter.

Neil Bothwick A

The Humane Interface

- Book, 236pp
- Author: Jef Raskin
- Publisher: Addison-Wesley
- ISBN: 0-201-37937-6
- Price: £19

Why is an Amiga nicer to use than a Windows PC? Jef Raskin has never used Amigas, and doesn't mention them, but by the time you've read this book you will begin to understand some of the reasons.

This is not a recipe book on how to design another program interface, but a deep look at the underlying problems. Raskin begins with a discussion of consciousness, habit, attention, interruptions and other aspects of our personal experience of using computers and other machines. This first section is fascinating and will make you see your mind from another point of view.

Jef Raskin invented the original all-in-one Macintosh computer (a very different beast from current Macs) and a mid-80s 68000-based small computer called the Canon Cat. The Mac used a combination of ideas that Raskin already had in his head with some from Xerox PARC. The Cat was a further development towards his concept of a computer for the Person In The Street. Unfortunately Canon made little attempt to market it.

"...more user-friendly than current Macs or PCs."

Much of this book is based on Raskin's experiences in designing these two computers. His argument is that it is possible to apply well understood principles of ergonomics and man-machine interaction to computer design, and that this will produce computers which are much more user-friendly than current Macs or PCs. For example, the user could start typing on the Cat as soon as it was switched on. The actual boot time was about 10 seconds, but an image of the display as it had been when switched off appeared on screen at once, and all keystrokes were stored during booting.

Although Raskin hasn't stopped thinking since he did the Cat, he does have in mind computers which are rather simpler than the A500, and which are mainly used for text editing or simple database work. Complex tasks such as architectural CAD or video editing are not discussed. The Cat had no file saving or loading - all work in memory was automatically backed up to the floppy - and this is now seen as an advanced feature for new operating systems. However, it is much easier to design this approach to work with a couple of dozen text projects than with systems containing thousands of files.

Even so, there are so many insights in this book that every programmer and hardware designer should read it. It will make you think.

Don Cox

Getting to know Photogenics.



This month we get to grips with Paul Nolan's flexible graphics package Photogenics.

Paul Nolan's Photogenics used to be a quirky package. Since the release of version 4, with a much-improved GUI and many new features, something that was a bit of a cult favorite has turned into the people's choice. When we recently polled our readers for their favorite commercial software of all time, Photogenics was rated higher than any other 24-bit paint package, with the titans ImageFX and Deluxe Paint as the only graphics packages of any description coming higher in the list.

It's in the Interface

As with any really good package, the interface that Photogenics offers you when you fire it up is clean and uncluttered. This does not reflect a lack of functions rather than a good interface design, where the layout of the interface reflects the usage of the package - more complex and less frequently used functions are nested further down in the menus, windows and so forth. One thing that makes Photogenics particularly good is that it allows many of the interface elements to be moved around, so that when you do need one of those less commonly used elements to hand, you can effectively move it up in the nesting to where it is easier to access.

Another thing that is so good about Photogenics is that the application of paint or processing effects is handled through the "paint layers" system, that allows a great deal of fine tweaking and experimentation to be done. However this system differs from the layers system as other paint packages know it, which has an impact on the way certain types of tasks such as image compositing need to be performed.

Finally, Photogenics is good because of the extraordinary flexibility of mark making that is possible, using both traditional "media" and effects painting. There are many ways of varying the type of mark that you make when you paint in Photogenics, and the more you understand the possibilities offered by the various effects, convolves alpha layers and so on, the wider the range of marks you will be able to make.

The tutorial

In this tutorial we'll be annotating a walk-through of an illustration project. This particular project consists of melding drawn and photographic elements into a single illustration. The details aren't relevant - it's simply chosen to illustrate certain features and certain ways of working with Photogenics. It is based on a technique I have been experimenting with for using modified photographic backgrounds and computer colouring for comic strip artwork. The image size I'm using here is 731x931 pixels, which corresponds to about 2.4 inches (6.2cm) by 3.1 inches (7.9cm) when printed at 300 DPI (Dots Per Inch) - a relatively small comic-strip panel.

If you want to follow along with the tutorial, just use any image you like for a background. Unless you have a specific purpose in mind for the image, the only requirement is that it takes up enough of the screen area for you to clearly see what you are doing, and is high enough resolution for you to have something to work with. If you are making an image to be viewed on a computer screen you might want an image size of 640x480 or 1024x768 pixels. If you are providing an illustration for a magazine at 300dpi you'd need to work at 2500x3500 pixels. You'll need a nice fast Amiga with plenty of RAM for that.

This tutorial is not meant to be the type that tells you how to create a very specific piece of work. The techniques involved are relevant to all sorts of tasks in Photogenics, and you may find it more instructive to try your own things based on the various techniques highlighted in the course of this tutorial.

"If you produce any really stonking pieces of artwork based on ideas you had from reading this tutorial..."

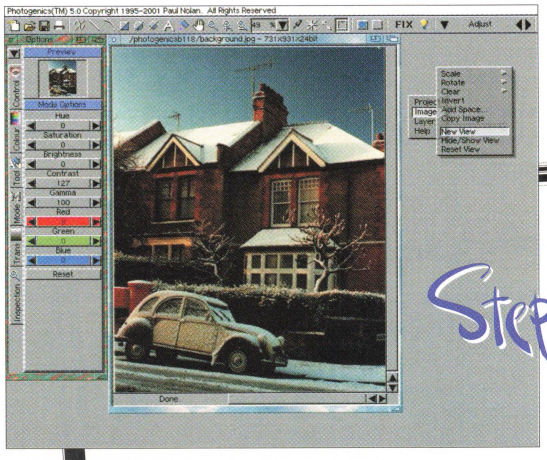
Breakdown

The first stage of this tutorial deals with photographic backdrop, taking it through the process of preparing it for use (steps 1-4), a brief look at setting up the GUI to suit the task (steps 5 and 6) and a little bit of local processing working with a second image Rub Thru (step 7). Finally, we deal with some of the ways of getting the right kind of marks when you draw (steps 8-9), before getting out the drawing tools to start drawing onto the photographic image. I'll cover a couple of aspects of using the interface on the way.

In the next parts of this tutorial we'll move onto the foreground image and expand on the concept of layers, alpha channels and Rub Thru, showing some of the unusual ways Photogenics can be used to draw images. Finally we will get onto the process of compositing the image, and ensure that it fits in well.

If you produce any really stonking pieces of artwork based on ideas you had from reading this tutorial, or if there's something you desperately want to know about Photogenics, write to us at all our usual addresses.

Andrew Korn A



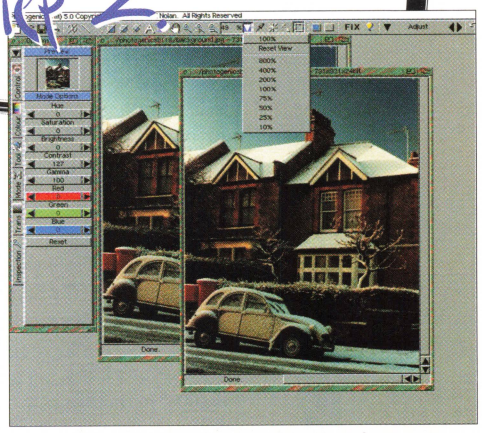
Step 1.

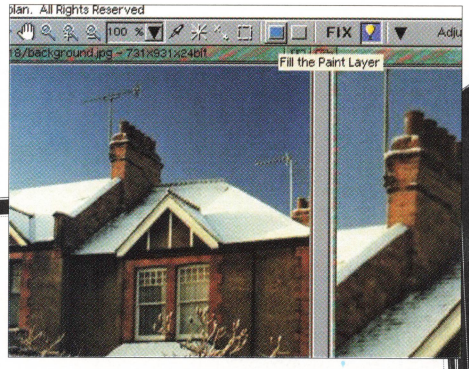
This project starts off with a photographic background, but the idea here is not simply to make a basic photo-montage. The photograph is going to be drawn over to give it an appearance that will match the drawing to be montaged onto it, while retaining the photographic detail.

It's important to get the image right for a job like this, so the first thing to do is apply some adjustments to the image using the 'Mode>Colour Mode>Adjust' option from the pop-down menu. Having two views of the image can make this process easier to judge. Select the 'Image>New View' menu option.

Step 2

We now have two windows showing matching views of the same image. Select one of the windows and move the zoom gadget to 100 percent. This allows us to see the details in the big version as well as the whole image in the small version.





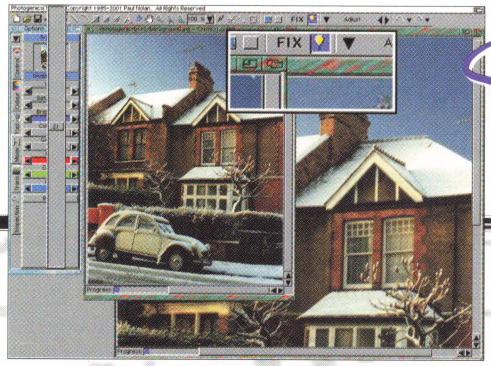
Step 3.

The next step is to select the variations we wish to apply to the image. It's important that there's not too much colour in the image - otherwise it will be hard to draw over it - so the saturation comes down a bit.

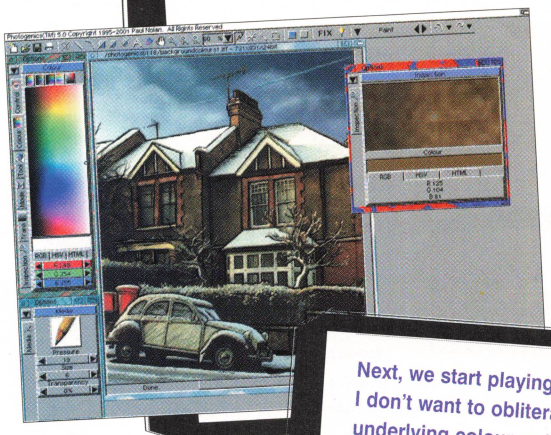
The original photograph is almost unnaturally coloured, so I've tweaked the hue setting to make the colours more neutral. I've pushed the gamma up a little to get those slightly flattened mid-tones that helps the illustrated appearance. Once you have a guess for your settings, hit the 'Fill Paint Layer' icon (the blue-filled square in the icon toolbar) and examine the effect.

Step 4.

Use 'Experiment Mode' to play with the settings a little and find the balance that's right for you - in this case I needed to make the image paler by adding more brightness. You can slide the sliders and watch the image immediately start to update with the new Adjustment Mode settings. When you have a setting you are happy with, hit the 'FIX' icon in the icon toolbar.



Step 5.



The effect I am trying to get here requires me to make marks that enhance rather than entirely replacing the existing colours. I do this in two ways; firstly by exaggerating some of the already existing textures and by applying lines that follow a common direction of shading, as hand-drawn artwork does, and secondly by highlighting existing colours by exaggerating the colour difference between two areas of different colour. The key to both of these is to make marks that are either lighter or darker than the base tone they are drawn on, yet blend with it. By using the Inspection panel and the eyedropper tool, I scan over any coloured area looking for the highlights and shadows within the pre-existing texture, using the highlight colour for light lines and the shadow colour for dark lines, as shown here. To maximise the visual impact of any line, place lines of the highlight and shadow tones right next to each other.

Step 9.

Next, we start playing with colours. I don't want to obliterate the underlying colour or texture so much as enhance it and give it the feel of an illustration. I've basically use two kinds of strokes in this illustration. First is the denser black line, which is done with the paint brush media, set to a size of 6 and a pressure of 16. This produces a soft but reasonably dense line, which can easily be thickened to a solid black.

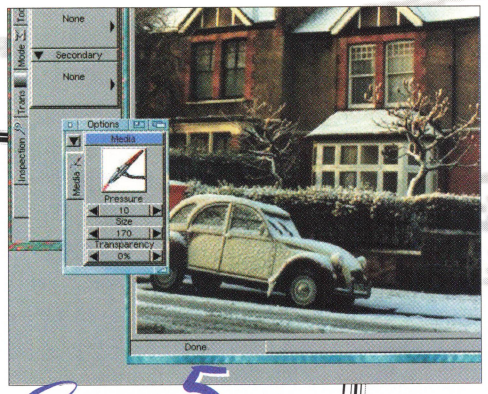
A technique worth knowing here is that for a finer line it's a good idea to lower the pressure rather than the brush size. Too small a brush size means it doesn't have enough inherent anti-aliasing.

Laying multiple fatter strokes at lower pressure will tend to produce a soft edged line with a very dark centre, which appear to be quite a fine line. When doing this sort of work it's good to see the image zoomed out a little as well as on the pixel level - you can see here that the colouring on the postbox looks quite clearly defined in the main image but scrappy in the zoom.

The second type of line is the textured colour line, which looks a bit like coloured pencil, and is indeed done with the pencil tool, set to size 4 or 6 and pressure going up and down around 20 depending on whether I want a faint shading or a prominent line.

Step 8.



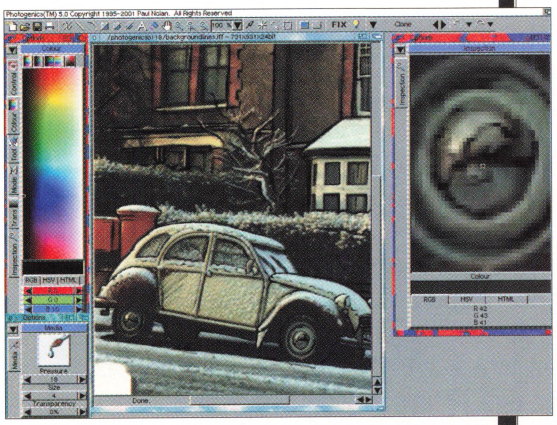


Step 5.

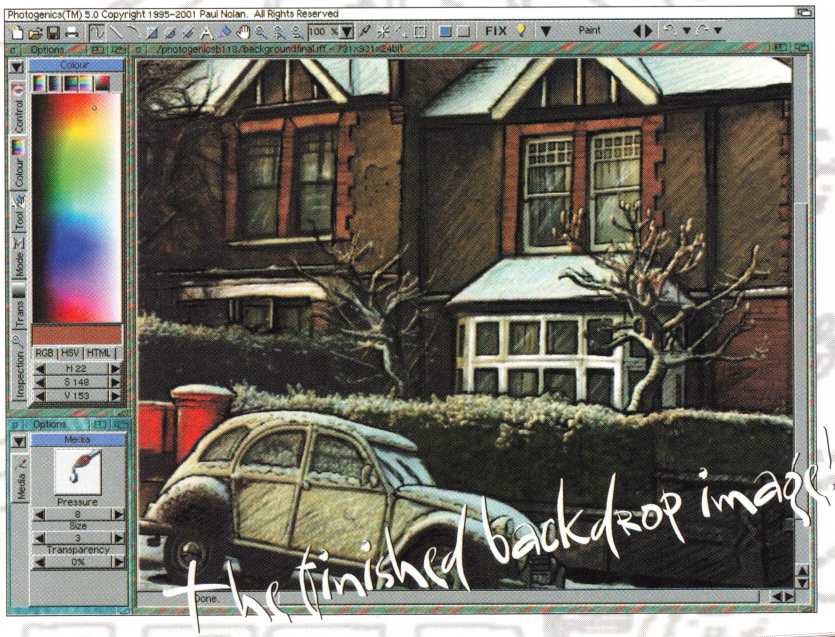
The next stage is the drawing bit. Basically, we're going to start off by drawing dark outlines around things. Before a single mark is made, it makes sense to lay the GUI out in a way that suits what we're going to do.

By default, the Media options panel is on a different tabbed page from the colour picker. As these are the main tools we'll be using, put the mouse on the blue bar with the word "Media" on, left-click and drag to outside the Options panel window. This will cause a new options window to be opened with the Media options panel in it. Move this window somewhere convenient.

Step 6.



Now we can select the Colour tab without losing access to the media chooser. The colour tab includes a Palette option which we won't need, so tear this off the way you did with the Media tab and dump it out of the way - you now have a full sized colour picker. I've done the same thing here with the Inspection panel, which offers a zoom view centered on the paintbrush, very useful for areas of fine detail. As you can see, what I'm doing first is to simplify the image by adding dark outlines, particularly where there is no "natural" outline, as in where two areas of similar colour meet.

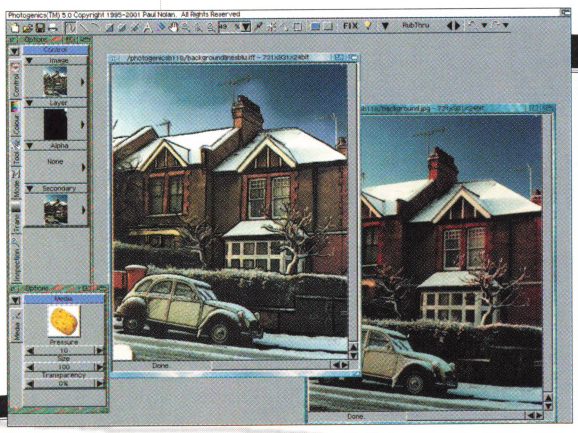


Step 7.

This leaves us with a problem - the sky has no outlines, and the colour is too pallid after the image manipulation. Remember to fix all your work and save it, renaming the file when you do so.

Now load the original file again, and you'll have two windows, one for the original and one for the modified image. Select the modified image in the Image selector tab on the Control Options panel, and the original image in secondary behind it. Now select Rub Thru mode, and the sponge media. Where you apply the sponge the original image shows through, so I can paint the original sky colour back in place.

I've left some patchy areas of the paler sky in place to make clouds - this makes life doubly easy as I don't have to bother bleeding the Rub Thru right up to the edges. The elements in the sky I don't want there - the moon and one of the aerials - are easily removed by painting over them with other areas of the sky using the Clone icon from the toolbar.





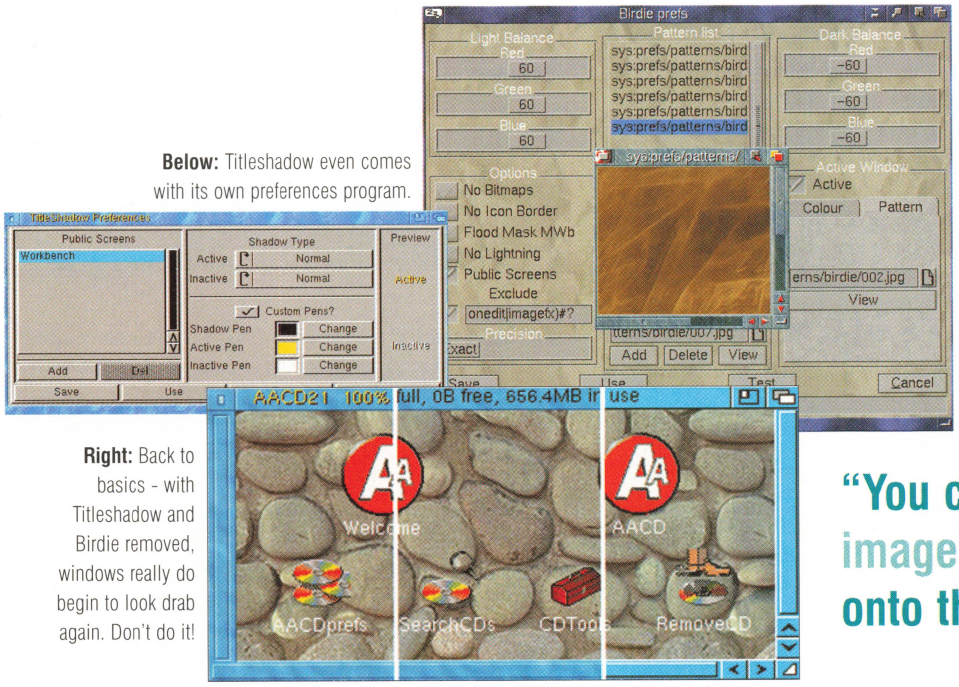
OS3.9 Masterclass *part 3*

Further tips for a brighter looking Workbench for the Summer, tips on icons and tooltypes, and details of how to get yourself wired up to the world.

In this month's instalment of our OS3.9 Masterclass, we'll be concentrating on making your Workbench look fantastic, as well as showing you how easy it is to get on the Internet with OS3.9's built-in networking software. So sit back, relax... okay, that's enough relaxing, these things don't happen all by themselves whilst you sit there picking your nose, you know! Let's get to it.

Last month we looked into sprucing up your icons, as well as brightening up the fonts and backdrops that Workbench uses - but when you've got a big ugly frame stuck around the edge of all your windows, it can detract from the view somewhat. Looking at some of the screengrabs on these pages, you couldn't fail to notice that they don't use standard Amiga windows and gadgets - there's not a spot of that blue/grey GUI in sight. How did we get rid of that drab colour scheme? Simple. The bulk of this task was achieved with two programs called VisualPrefs and Birdie.

"How did we get rid of that drab colour scheme? Simple."



Below: Titleshadow even comes with its own preferences program.

Left: Birdie's prefs program may take a little while to get used to.

Right: Back to basics - with Titleshadow and Birdie removed, windows really do begin to look drab again. Don't do it!

"You can replace an icon's image by dropping another icon onto the window..."

You've been framed!

VisualPrefs allows you to alter almost any aspect of Intuition. Standard window gadgets can be replaced with bitmap images, cycle gadgets can turn into popup menus and you can even alter the colours of window borders and the position of their titles. The best way to explore VisualPrefs is to install it and play with the settings. Although it patches some fundamental system functions, it's proven to be stable and is easy to remove if you don't like it, simply by taking one line out of your Startup-sequence - so what have you got to lose by trying it?

Birdie, meanwhile, is a much simpler program with only one function. It changes window borders to use an image or gradient in place of the usual solid colour. Birdie uses a lot of command line options and can be a little tricky to set up, so install the separate prefs program (cunningly named birdieprefs) too. Then you only need to add

```
Run >NIL: Birdie ? <Env:Birdie.prefs
```

...to your User-startup to get multicoloured window borders. Birdie basically takes a list of graphic files (make sure you've got the appropriate datatypes installed if you want to use PNG, BMP, or other picture formats) and randomly chooses one each time you open a new window. It can work on screens other than Workbench if you're happy for it to do so (this can cause problems with some programs which open their own screens, which you can tell birdie not to touch) and you can specify a single pattern - or a level of additional colour highlighting - for active windows, so you can still tell which window you're supposed to be looking at.

After installing Birdie, you may find that window titles are harder to read. Thankfully, someone has already rectified this problem with Titleshadow, a small utility which allows you to put an outline and/or shadow around the text in a window's title bar. Titleshadow comes with its own preferences program, so it's a doddle to set up just how you want it.

You Tool!

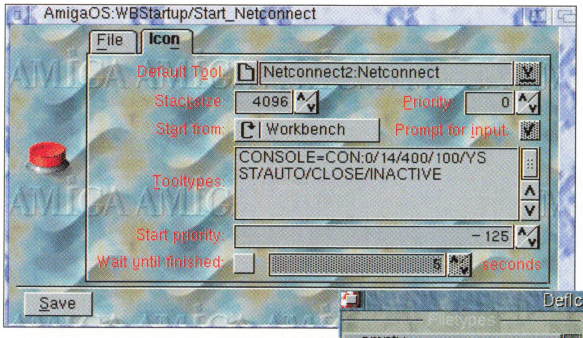
Okay, Workbench itself is looking a lot better now, so it's time to get a little more technical. One element of the Amiga's OS which you'll be using constantly are icons - but they're much more than just a pretty picture to be shown on your Workbench screen. Icons can tell you a lot about the file they're attached to, and contain information about what should happen when you double-click on them.

Each file's project icon has a default tool, which specifies the program that should be used to handle that file. Text files usually use "Multiview" as the default tool (the multipurpose file viewer provided as part of the Amiga's OS), so double-clicking that icon runs Multiview and loads the text, picture or audio file into it. The disadvantage of using a specific program as the default tool for each type of file is that you need to change all the icons on your system if you want those files to use a new program.

If you fit a graphics card and want to be able to view JPEGs in their full 24-bit glory, for example, you don't want to have to change the default tool for every picture's icon to something that displays 24-bit images. Having said that, there are a few programs on Aminet that will change the default tools of all icons on a drive. One particular favourite is Deft_II, which is used to standardise the default tools for the files on our coverdiscs.

If you want to change any attributes of an individual icon, the new icon information window in OS 3.9 is particularly useful. RAWBinfo (ReAction WorkBench Info, located in the WBStartup drawer) is the utility which provides this icon information window when you click once on an icon and press RAmiga-i. RAWBinfo now has

more features than the DOpus equivalent and Opus users can switch to using it by setting the environment variable DOpus/UseWBInfo. You will need to reboot for the change to take effect, and it only applies to those using Opus as a Workbench replacement. Most of RAWBinfo's features are obvious from the new icon information window's GUI and menus but there are a couple of hidden extras. You can replace an icon's image by dropping another icon onto the window and you can enable or disable tooltypes by shift-clicking on them. This last feature requires Boing Bag 1 - which you'll already know if you've read through the .readme file provided with the update.

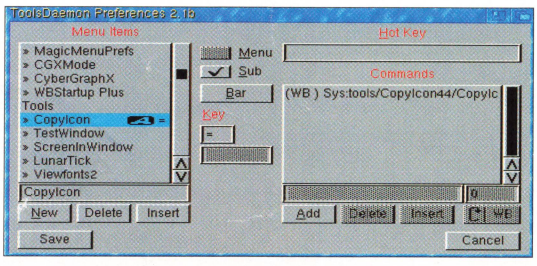


Right: RAWBinfo provides Workbench with a fully-featured Icon info window.

Tooltypes are the Workbench equivalent of command line arguments. They are entered one per line in the icon information window (click the "Icon" tab in RAWBinfo's window) and can either appear as "NAME=VALUE" or simply as "NAME", the latter being used as a switch that modifies the behaviour of the program. You can also put tooltypes in a project icon: they will be passed to the default tool when the icon is double-clicked. A tooltype can be temporarily disabled by enclosing it in brackets, which is done automatically if you shift-click on the tooltype after installing Boing Bag 1 - another welcome time-saver.

A nice environment

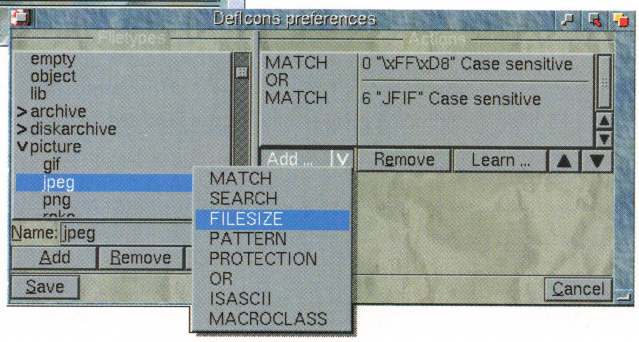
When you switch Workbench to show all files ('Window > Show > All Files' menu option), a default icon is used for any file that doesn't have one of its own. With previous versions of the operating system, these were limited to default tool or project icons. OS3.9's DefIcons program, however (which should be in WBStartup) chooses a specific icon for each type of file. The icons



Right: ToolsDaemon's Preferences window has limited drag-and-drop functionality, although it's rarely bettered if you want a utility that adds extra features to Workbench's default menu set.

"You can replace an icon's image by dropping another icon onto the window and you can enable or disable tooltypes by shift-clicking..."

that are displayed are stored in ENVARC:Sys and copied to ENV: on startup, which could use up lot of RAM if you have a large number of them, unless you use HappyENV or Env-Handler (see this month's Active Shareware, and look on our coverdisc). The DefIcons prefs program defines a number of filetypes, which you can alter, add to or remove. When a file matches a file type, the corresponding icon is used from ENV:Sys/. For example, if the file matches the filetype "jpeg", the icon displayed is ENV:Sys/def_jpeg.info. Snapshotting an icon ('Icons > Snapshot' menu option) saves a permanent icon for a file if it doesn't already have one of its own.



Left: DefIcons are highly configurable - not that there's a great deal to add to OS3.9's defaults!

Several sets of OS3.5/3.9 ColorIcons have been uploaded to Aminet in the time since OS3.5's release, so you will probably be able to find some icons that you prefer over OS3.9's defaults, such as the green filing cabinet-style icons used for all the drawers on your system (the first place to look for some different icons is on the OS3.9 CD).

To quickly copy one icon image over another one - or change several drawer icons from the default green to a cooler blue variety, for example, just install CopyIcon from the Contribution/Workbench drawer of the OS3.9 CD. CopyIcon allows you to click on an icon whose image you like, shift-click on a bunch of other icons that you want to copy it to, then double-click the CopyIcon program itself to perform the operation.

This process is still a little long-winded, however, so install a utility like ToolsDaemon, add CopyIcon as a menu item and give it a keyboard shortcut. You can then copy icons at any time by selecting the source, shift-selecting the destination icon(s) and hitting a couple of keys. ToolsDaemon needs patching if you want to use it with OS3.9, which is a little fiddly, but once installed it allows you to add your own menus to Workbench's default, rather limited, set. Drag and drop functionality helps, but everything that you drag onto ToolsDaemon's preferences window automatically gets added to the


...Brace for Impact...
www.merlancia.com
Merlancia Industries

"It just goes to show, no Amiga set-up is perfect."

bottom of your list, so you need to move entries to where you want them manually using the RAmiga-U and RAmiga-D keyboard shortcuts.

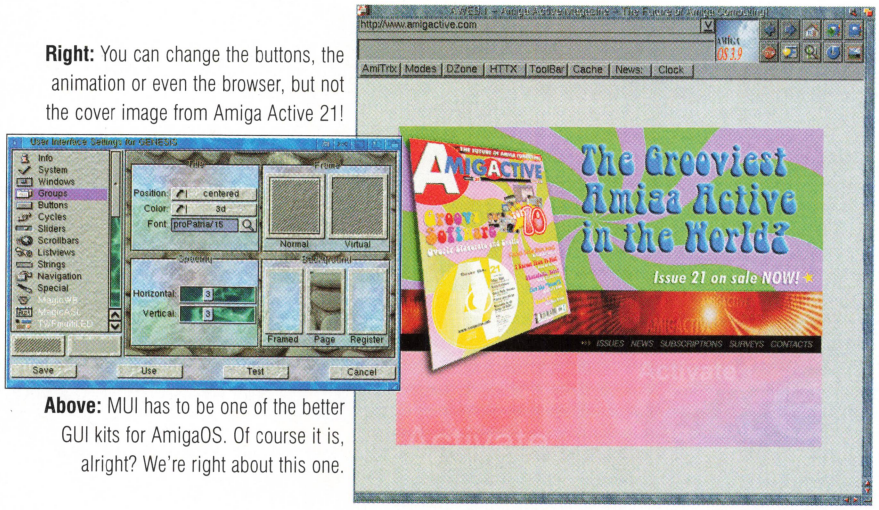
Whilst on the subject of menus, MagicMenu has to be the ultimate aesthetic menu utility for AmigaOS, providing colourful, drop-shadowed, good-looking (even translucent) popup menus which are accessible from anywhere on the Workbench screen. Although, for some reason, on the system we're using for this Masterclass we could only get it to display its menus in non-translucent, not-very-sexy grey. It worked before, honest! An investigation into this criminal act of blandness is underway. It just goes to show, no Amiga set-up is perfect.

Start browsing

Once you've got online with OS3.9 (see the "Get Connected" boxout, below), you can start AWeb (OS3.9's default web browser) and visit your first web site (see the "Where on the Web?" boxout, far right, for a few suggestions on where to begin). AWeb doesn't need any setting up to get going, although you may want to fiddle with the settings later to make it suit your system. Its appearance can be changed by loading different button sets. There are a couple of alternatives supplied as standard, but you can get plenty more from the AWeb home page, *Amiga Active* CDs or Aminet.

The version of AWeb supplied with OS 3.9 has several features disabled. Before you upgrade to the full version, you may want to try out the demo versions of the other two browsers, IBrowse and Voyager (which both require MUI, so install it from AACD22:CDTools/MUI if you haven't already got it installed). Each browser has its advocates and detractors, but since there are demos of each one, why not try them all and make up your own mind? Unlike our PC owning friends, there is no concept of a default browser on the Amiga; three different browsers will quite happily co-exist without causing any problems.

Right: You can change the buttons, the animation or even the browser, but not the cover image from Amiga Active 21!



Above: MUI has to be one of the better GUI kits for AmigaOS. Of course it is, alright? We're right about this one.

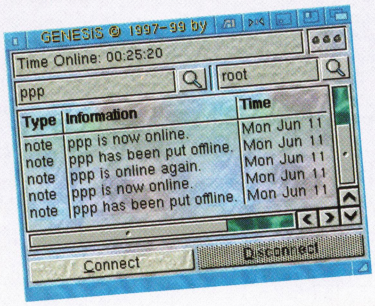
E-mail, the heart of the Internet

The Internet isn't all about the web, whatever the popular media may imply. The most used application of the Internet is electronic mail, or e-mail for short. OS3.9 comes with a very basic e-mail program, so we'll take a quick look at how to get going with it and then consider the alternatives.

After firing up AmigaMail, select the 'Settings > Configure' menu item. The first tab defines the details that are added to your e-mails. You need to add your name and e-mail address here - otherwise people won't be able to reply. Leave the 'Reply Address' box empty unless you have a good reason to have replies sent to a different place.

The 'SMTP Server' tab sets up where you send mails. This should generally be the SMTP or mail server of your ISP. Leave the other settings as they are. Most ISPs only allow their own users to use their server. If you use more

Get Connected...Get Conne

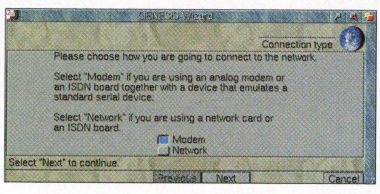


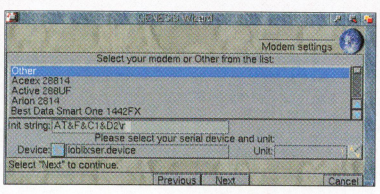
Above: Get Connected with OS3.9 and Genesis!

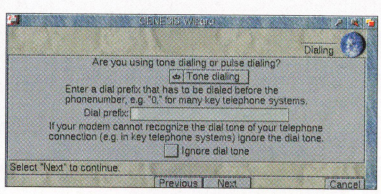
Getting your Amiga online with OS 3.9 is a breeze. The first thing you have to do, obviously, is install the Internet software, by selecting the relevant option in the OS3.9 installer. Then you should install Boing Bag 1, as this contains some important updates to the Internet software. You can proceed without BB1, but you'll need MUI installed, as the connection wizard wasn't ported to Reaction in time for the initial OS 3.9 release.

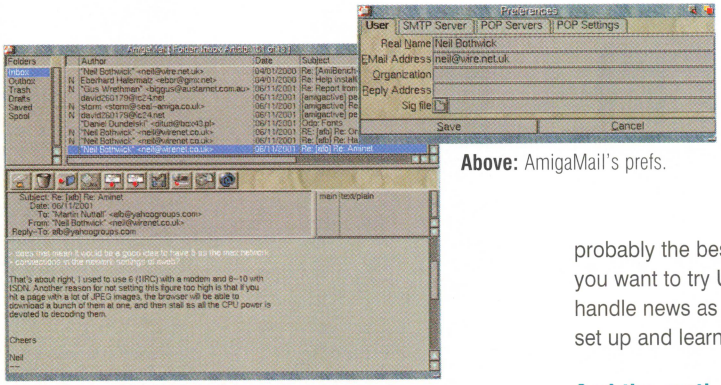
You will need three pieces of information regarding your Internet account: the telephone number to dial, your login name and your password. If you've got these and your modem is connected and switched on, you can start GenesisWizardRA. Leave the selection at 'Modem' in the first window.

The second window asks about the make of your modem. Don't worry if yours isn't listed, most modems now use the same chipset with the same commands, so select 'Other'. This only sets the initialisation string for









Above: AmigaMail's prefs.

Above: AmigaMail, the default e-mail client provided with OS3.9, has limited features, but is still usable.

than one ISP, you'll probably have to change this each time you connect to a different one.

The 'POP Servers' section sets up where you collect mail from. Click on 'Add' and fill out the boxes on the right. The first is the name of the ISP's mail server, the second is your login name and the third your password. Leave 'Spool File' at the default; AmigaMail won't work if you clear it. It's normal to delete your mail from the server once it has been downloaded - otherwise you'll find things getting very slow after a while. But leave the delete box unchecked until you are happy with AmigaMail as you don't want to delete mails until you know things are working correctly. Leave the 'POP Settings' section for now and press 'Save'.

AmigaMail is very basic, not much more than an example of how the OS3.9 mail library works, so you'll soon find yourself considering the alternatives. The main three contenders are MicroDot-II, THOR and YAM. MicroDot and YAM are both quite easy to get started with and have a reasonable range of features. THOR is far more powerful but has a steep learning curve. YAM is probably the best all-rounder for general e-mail use. If you want to try Usenet news, MicroDot and THOR both handle news as well as mail, meaning you only have to set up and learn one program for both types of forum.

"If you have any questions..."

And the rest!

That's all we've got space for this month. We've covered quite a lot of ground here, so don't worry if you can't take it all in at once. If you have any questions, *Amiga Active*'s resident Guru will be more than happy to sort you out, so turn to page 58 to find out how you can get in touch. Meanwhile, if you'd like to know more about a particular aspect of OS3.9, we're all ears. Interactive (page 54) is the place to write to with your suggestions and requests for coverage of specific topics. A

(not) On the CD

We were so busy writing this month's edition of our OS3.9 Masterclass, we plain forgot about providing all the related files on the CD. Many apologies for this oversight, but we'll include them all on next month's. Meanwhile, for those of you with an Internet connection (no excuses, we've shown you how on these pages), you can get hold of the related files for this month's Masterclass by visiting our web site. Just point your browser to www.amigactive.com/inthemag/OS3.9/ for all the relevant links and info.

Where on the Web?

Now you are online, you'll need some places to visit - here are a few suggestions. See the Active Media section of *Amiga Active* each month for some more.

***Amiga Active* Magazine: http://www.amigactive.com**

Amiga: http://www.amiga.com

Czech Amiga News (in English despite the name): http://www.realdreams.cz/amiga

Amiga.org (another Amiga news site): http://www.amiga.org

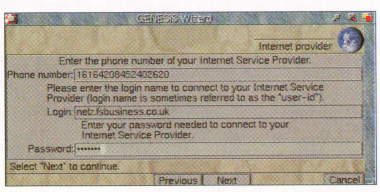
Aminet (a huge archive of Amiga software): http://uk.aminet.net/aminet

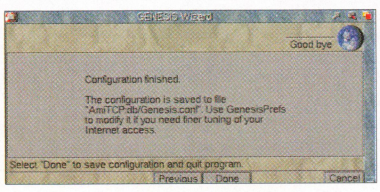
ted...Get Connected...Get

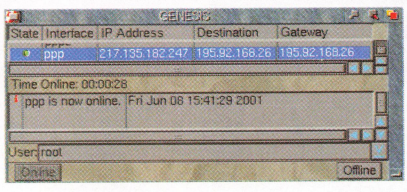
the modem, a good choice for most makes is "AT&F&C1&D2W2\r" (without the quotes). You also select your serial device here, using 'serial.device' and '0' for the standard serial port.

You shouldn't need to change anything in the third window, but the fourth is where you give the phone number and login. Make sure these are exactly right: login details are usually case-sensitive. When you press the 'Next' button in this window, GenesisWizard will dial into your ISP, login to your account and extract the information needed to set up Genesis. Then it will drop the connection and apply the settings.

You're now ready to go online for real, so start up Genesis and press the 'online' button. The connection "light" in Genesis' window will turn yellow while dialling, then green when connected. If it turns red, there's a problem - but don't give up straight away, try again in case the problem is at the ISP's end, then check through the settings in Genesis' Prefs window, paying particular attention to the login and password.

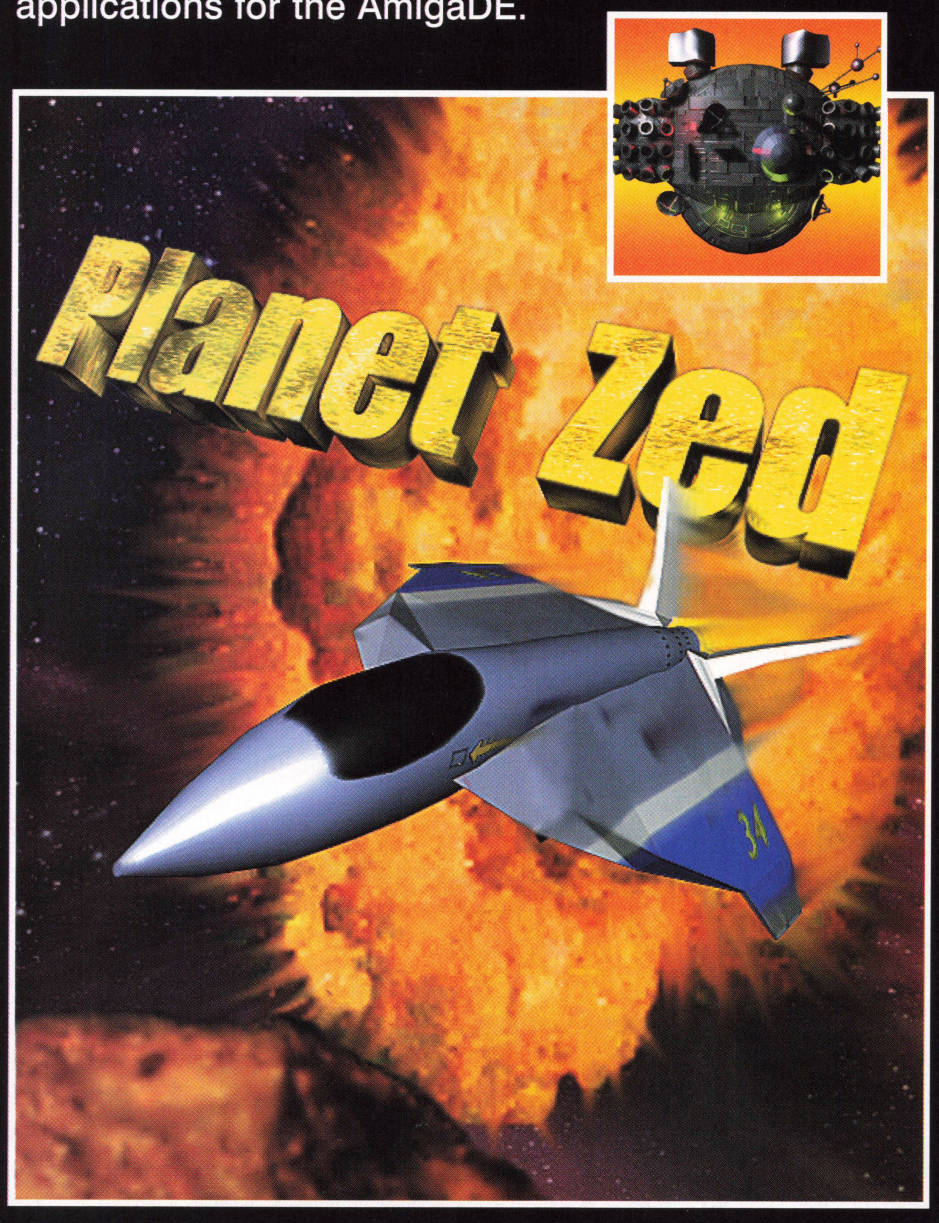






PLAYING WITH PLANETS

Matthew Kille, a PhD Cybernetics student, is currently writing up his final year thesis in between developing applications for the AmigaDE.



Matthew Kille: I've been a fan of Amiga computers since 1989, starting with the A500, then the A500+, A2000, A1200, A4000 and A1200T. I currently own three Amigas, all of which are in regular use. I've developed a small handful of Classic Amiga apps in the past, but never released anything to more than a small group of friends.

Having watched the rise and repeated fall of Amiga so many times in the past, I decided that this was probably the last real chance for Amiga. So when the Amiga SDK arrived, I grabbed a copy as fast as possible and began getting to know it. I don't think that there is any doubt that the Tao intent/elate platform will be a success. It's such a great concept. I now feel that it is my job, along with the other Amiga fans out there, to make sure that the system that Amiga builds is as close to what I consider to be the true 'Amiga experience' as possible. No other platform out there is even close to getting this right. For the first time in ages, Amiga is being run by people who understand these requirements and, having had the privilege to see what Amiga has been working on behind the scenes, I am very optimistic about Amiga's future.

***AA:** So what are we looking at here, Matthew?*

MK: These are all images from the game "Planet Zed", a shoot'em'up game that shares many of its features with the classic Bitmap Brothers Xenon-II megablast. The game features vertical parallax, variable speed, two way scrolling (you can reverse the scroll to fly backwards out of deadends), 16-bit rendered graphics, and requires just 800k of available memory (compared to 6MB for the closest rival on PocketPC).

***AA:** Best of all, it's platform independent, isn't it?*

MK: That's right, because of intent. Planet Zed is written in 100 percent VP assembler.

***AA:** What have been your experiences of using the current, rather limited Amiga SDK to develop Planet Zed? Does it have the features you need?*

MK: I've never really been much of a fan of the full-blown IDE; just give me a simple text editor and a command-line. So, I've not had any problems using the SDK, though I know other people see a serious lack of development tools. For the time being, those people must make do with using the relevant tools on the host platform.

I have both the Linux and Windows SDK. The Linux SDK is definitely the 'smoothest', with the Windows SDK suffering from jumps and stutters in performance. This is a real killer for a smooth scroll effect, as in Planet Zed. Sadly, since intent is at the mercy of the underlying host OS, there isn't really anything that can be done about this.

***AA:** Tell us a little about your programming background.*

MK: I've been studying computer science related subjects for the past nine years, in which time I've seen quite a few concepts in computer languages: functional; declarative; procedural; parallel; scripts; and assemblers. Up until about a year ago, my preferred language was C++. I liked the way it was high-level from one point of view, and low-level from another. Good for all tasks.

***AA:** So what did you think about VP assembler when you started using it?*

MK: VP assembler is quite simply brilliant. It's so nice to work with. High-level and well structured on the surface and really low-level nitty-gritty when needed. The tool concept is also very powerful, efficient, and easy to develop and use. Much better than traditional, monolithic, libraries.

On top of these great features, it's platform/hardware independent - a concept that is definitely going to revolutionise the whole computing industry. No doubt about it! Combined with what Amiga has planned for the near future, this is the most exciting time for computing since the late 80s.

***AA:** How long did it take you to write the basics of PZ?*

MK: Planet Zed has just celebrated its two-month birthday. That includes the programming of the game itself, in-house level designer tools, and all the graphics. However, much of the underlying system is formed using my "Rapid Development Kit" (RDK), a set of tools providing support for the display, sprites, event handling, etc., with an emphasis on getting results quickly. Together, these tools have been in development since late last year.

***AA:** What are the basics of a game like this, anyway?*

MK: Well, to write a scrolling shoot-em-up: 1) Make a scroll (three layers is good). 2) Add a player spaceship and make it move with user input. 3) Make the player ship bounce off certain parts of the scenery, and not others. 4) Add aliens, moving in smooth/graceful attack waves, shooting occasionally. 5) Allow player to shoot back, around 120 bullets on screen at a time is good. 6) Keep track of health, score etc., and sprinkle with the odd turret and big end-of-level baddie.

"VP assembler is quite simply brilliant..."



***AA:** Sounds simple! Did intent make the whole process easy for you?*

MK: Actually, intent was not much of a help! Amiga programmers are used to relying on a consistent display refresh rate, synchronising their updates with the natural vertical blank of the video hardware. This, and other great classic Amiga features are what allow for amazingly smooth 2D scrolling effects - unbeaten, even today.

PC graphic cards tend to work on the principle that if you refresh the video fast enough, the user wont notice an uneven frame rate. This is the model Planet Zed has to work with, since it must work on a wide range of display devices.

***AA:** But you are very positive about intent, aren't you? What makes you so sure Amiga and Tao have got it right?*

MK: Well, to be honest, at the time I thought all the previous Amiga owners were going in the right direction! However, nothing ever materialised, which was deeply disappointing. So instead, we should judge Amiga by their actions, and no-one else has done so much in so little time. Moreover, whereas the previous owners were focused on relatively unambitious objectives, the current Amiga team has great vision and wide ranging plans. These aren't just pie in the sky dreams, without substance. These are real systems, being developed now. Watch this space! A

Name Shogo: Mobile Armor Division
Developer Hyperion: www.hyperion-software.com
Distributor Eye-Play: +44 (0)1642 713185 or visit www.eye-play.com
Price £34.95

SHOGO 昇剛

mobile armor division

Is your PowerPC-equipped Amiga crying out for some visually stunning, no-holds-barred 3D action? Step right this way...



For all the promise of PowerPC hardware on the Amiga, the benefits have been few and far between. A Candy Factory here, a movie player there, a few utilities and some games. Take a look at your most-used programs... how many are PPC? So it's a good thing that the few PPC games we have been blessed with (GL_Quake, Heretic II, WipEout 2097) are actually rather good. Now, Shogo is here to make it a threesome of first-person 3D shooters... in style. Ported from the 1998 PC release, Hyperion have not only brought Shogo to the Amiga, they've also converted the much lauded LithTech game engine by Monolith. So, has all the hard work paid off?

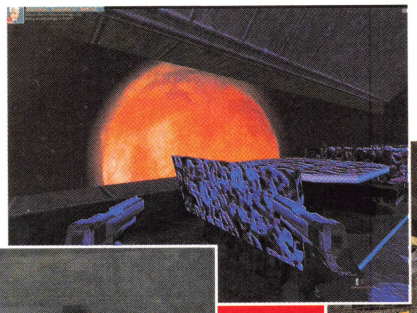
Installation is painless, but takes around 40 minutes - plenty of time not only to make yourself a cuppa, but pop into town and do a bit of shopping as well (faster CD-ROM drives will help to hurry things along). Once the several hundred megabytes of files have been transferred to your hard drive (a minimum of 400MB; around 500MB if you want to install the movies as well), you're ready to rock and roll.

The game launcher provides you with such a plethora of options, it's like being Lara Croft - there's so many things to switch on and off. Getting into the game proper, you're treated to an intro animation backed by a great Japanese Pop track, wherein lies a clue as to the heart of Shogo: anyone mildly familiar with Japanese Anime (Manga, Robotech, Akira et. al.) will recognise the game's inspiration straight away. You are Sanjuro Makabe, a security officer in the UCA who is a tad upset at having lost his brother, lover and best friend *[different people, right? -Ed.]* in battle. You are to investigate The Fallen, a terrorist group who have all but taken over the planet Cronus.

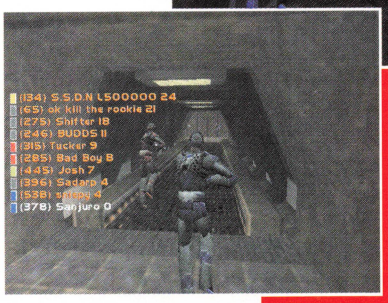
Now, we wouldn't normally dwell on storylines too much, as they are for the most part superfluous (or in some cases practically non-existent), but in this case the storyline is a major

"...anyone mildly familiar with Japanese Anime will recognise the game's inspiration straight away..."

"Shogo really involves you in the storyline..."







part of the game... and your actions can actually change the route you take as well as the final outcome. Shogo really involves you in the storyline, and in a few cases looks to your reaction to determine the course it takes. Movies throughout the game draw you further into Shogo's narrative, although you can disable these cut-scenes (along with practically everything else to speed things up) from the game's launcher.

Also available in blue

Shogo distinguishes itself by varying the fighting between two perspectives: either on foot or within the extra protection (not to mention firepower) of your massive Mech, of which there are four types to choose from. These four mechs range from the massive firepower/slug-slow beast to the light-armoured/more sprightly variety. If you're not bothered about speed and features, however, you can do what I did: go for colour and style. CD and sunroof are optional.

Controlling the game is, well, complicated to start with. If you ever had a hankering to be a God in some under-developed country, the options in Shogo will bring you that feeling of total control. Would you like to fire with your joystick, Sir? Or perhaps Sir would prefer to fiddle with his mouse and bash buttons instead? Key controls are totally configurable, so the Mozarts among you can perform symphonies on your keyboard whilst everyone else can just group everything together and use a button-bashing technique to change weapons, side-step, shoot things and so on.

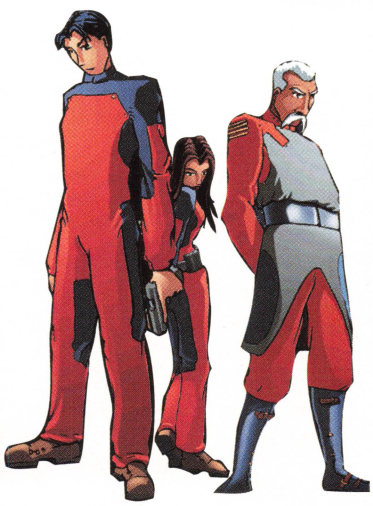
Metal with attitude

The first few levels of Shogo serve as a good introduction for mastering the controls and getting used to the style of the game.

Wander back to a departing ship (sack the pilot - why couldn't he just land closer to you?) blowing away a couple of opposition mechs and a few tanks along the way. Then you're out of the mech and wandering about the base on foot, looking for the admiral. Other characters inhabit the world, and you can eavesdrop on their conversations or even interact with them in some cases - though despite my efforts, the barmaid wasn't having any of it.

Shogo oozes character and humour through the storyline, cut-scenes and interaction. When pushing one of the guards around while trying to find the admiral, the big butch one reatliates by saying, *"I have my orders Sir, please be nice to me"*, ▶

"...up to 128 players can fight it out, death-match style..."



Multiplayer networks

SEAL's Robert Williams gives us his view of Shogo's network play.

In multiplayer mode, up to 128 (!) players can fight it out death-match style over a network. Shogo only supports TCP/IP networking so you'll need a stack like Miami or Genesis running on each machine, although the physical connection can be anything your TCP/IP stack supports: a simple null-modem cable, Ethernet cards or the Internet.

Once the TCP/IP connection is established you can enter Multiplayer mode from either the launcher or Shogo's in-game menus. The Multiplayer Wizard is then started, which guides you though the setup step by step. First, you choose whether to host a new game or join an existing one, then you choose a name for your player, which MCA you wish to use and its colour scheme. If you're hosting a game, the next few screens let you set parameters such as the number of frags (kills) or minutes after which the level will change, how many players will be allowed to connect and so on. Finally, you select which levels you want to play on. There are about 20 levels to choose from, some of which you will recognise from the single player game, whilst others are specially designed for death matches. As in the single-player game, some of the levels see you fighting in your Mech and others have you running around on foot.

If you're connecting to an existing server, the Wizard lists any games available on your local network. If you want to join an Internet game you need the IP address of the server. To find the addresses of currently active internet servers visit the Servers page at www.planetshogo.com or www.shogo-mad.com/servers. We tested local networking using a null modem connection running at 57,600bps with good results - although there did seem to be some slow-down when the action was particularly frantic. We were only able to briefly try Internet play, which we found rather slow (again, especially when there was a lot going on). As usual with Internet speed issues it's hard to say whether Shogo needs a particularly fast connection or if our connection was a particularly slow one.

"...yet another excellent addition to the Amiga PPC gaming fraternity..."

and it was with the utmost enjoyment that on a later level I blew away a snide ticket-master who said I'd have to validate my ticket before I could get on the train. Blam! Validated, sucker!

Level design is varied and interesting, especially during the city levels where the anime influence comes across loud and clear thanks to flashing neon "XXX" signs above a strip-club (no, you're not small enough to fit through the doorway with your mech-suit on). The action takes place both indoors and out amid the cityscape.

The graphics are colourful with accomplished textures. The LithTech engine has ably assisted in providing some excellent light-sourcing other special effects which help bring the game to life, although even with all the effects turned off, it still looks great. Sound effects are fantastic, and for once the voice-over acting is actually worth listening to, which makes a change from the normal comedy voices we've had in Amiga games before. If you have a sound card you'll be basking in aural heaven.

At its most basic, Shogo is a 3D action-fest, but to describe it as being similar to Quake or Heretic II would be doing it a disservice. There's a good amount of problem-solving and interaction involved here, and levels aren't your typical fare - they vary in both length, environment and objective. On some levels you don't even have to fight at all.

Weapons are excellent and imaginative: one of your enemies, the Spider, fires magnetic bombs that clang as they attach to you, and explode a few seconds later. When you get the sniper rifle it's possible to blow away the enemy from long-distance and complete the whole level without having a shot fired back, as the enemies' Artificial Intelligence (AI) isn't the best ever.

If you pick up a weapon that the enemy have dropped or you've found in exploded trucks, however, your mech will automatically arm itself with the new device if it's more powerful than the one you're using.



Shark bait

Hyperion have excelled themselves with this port of Shogo, but you can't expect everything from current Amiga hardware - the game isn't the fastest, but having said that, Shogo is definitely faster than Heretic II (reviewed way back in *Amiga Active* 7).

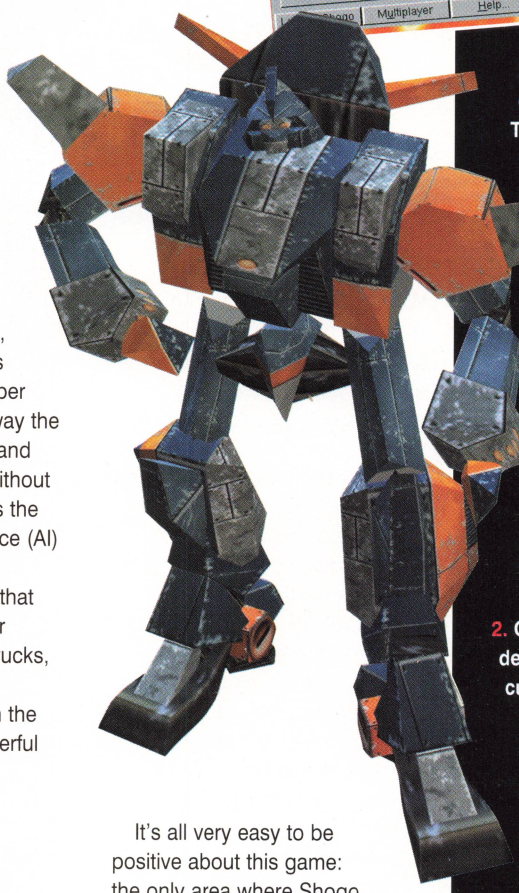
The frame rate drops on the larger levels, which sometimes makes it harder to lock onto the enemy, but it remains wholly playable, which is amazing considering the quality and size of the game. At the recent Kickstart show, for example, Robert Williams and Mick Sutton (of SEAL) set up a multiplayer network between their two machines, with Robert's Cyberstorm giving a marginally better framerate compared to Mick's Blizzard. Not that it helped him, mind you!

It's all very easy to be positive about this game: the only area where Shogo fails to shine is with its online gaming ability. As anyone who's tried 'net gaming will be able to appreciate, a slow framerate and/or connection means you're practiaclly shark bait. The only server that had anyone online when writing this review was in America, however - once some British or European servers are located, things should turn out to be far more enjoyable all round.

All in all, Shogo is yet another excellent addition to the Amiga PPC gaming fraternity. It has diversity, action, humour and a lot of little touches that make it special. More speed (which we'll get from AmigaOne systems) is all it would require to achieve perfection, but that's not the fault of Hyperion.

Gary Storm A





Shogo's launcher contains more choices than a dodgy satellite. Thomas Frieden, one of the lead programmers, has these tips to optimise performance:

1. If you have lots of RAM (128MB, say), set all caches to zero, and set the preload option on the Memory Options page to "Preload Everything". With less memory (64MB), you should set the caches to 3MB each, and set preload to "Preload to Cache Limit".

2. On the graphics side, set the details to full and then go to the custom settings and turn off:

Environment Mapping: This effect looks cool, but results in all the models being drawn twice. Turning it off should speed up the model rendering a lot.

Model Fullbrights: This effect also results in some models being drawn twice. Not as bad as the environment mapping, but still a lot of work.

Texture Detail: Set to "Medium" or "Low". This will mean there is less memory being used on the graphics card, so the relatively slow bus between graphics board and PPC card will not slow down the game too much.

3. It is also advisable to avoid using AHI for sound, unless you have a sound card - and even then, the direct memory access (DMA) sound driver will be much faster (AHI slows down the game by about 20 percent in some cases).

Speed me up, Scotty!

Ben Hermans, meanwhile, was able to confirm that Cyberstorm-PPC systems offer substantially faster performance over BPPC systems, for several reasons:

1. The 604e as used on the CyberstormPPC has two floating point units. 3D calculations are heavy on FPUs.

2. The CyberstormPPC has 64-bit memory addressing compared to 32-bit for the BlizzardPPC. Effectively, memory access is twice as fast on the CPPC. 3D games are heavily reliant on memory access.

Tip: Try setting the memory speed of your PPC card to 60ns instead of 70ns. You will immediately notice the difference. If you experience instability, your RAM is not of the highest quality and you should switch back to 70ns (this can be done via the early bootmenu of the BlizzardPPC, but don't forget to turn your system off completely after saving new settings, or they won't take effect).

Bus speed to the BVision graphics card over the BPPC's bus is only 12-14MB/s compared to the 18MB/s+ of the CVision/CyberstormPPC bus.

The companian 68k CPU on your PPC card also has an effect on performance. With an '060, Shogo will be several FPS quicker, because the '060 can handle the context-switches between 68k and PPC a lot faster.

Despite the severe limitations of the BlizzardPPC cards, the game will speed up even more when Voodoo3 drivers are released for the G-Rex and Predator PCI busboard (and, soon, the Prometheus).

LithTech Engine

LithTech is a proprietary game engine from Monolith, which features such as:

- Motion captured animation.
- Levels of detail (LoD) for models - each model can have hundreds of levels of detail at no extra memory cost, so models can be scaled back for slower systems. All models are hierarchical, keyframes are interpolated.
- Support of both rigid and deformation key-framed animation allowing both jointed and more organic models.
- Coloured lighting.
- Dynamic lighting light mapping.
- Translucency/transparency for water/glass effects.
- Real-time shadows.
- Landscapes.
- Sky portals which allow for animated skies.
- Various dynamic lighting options like solid light, smooth lights and dark lights.
- Coloured fog.
- Large scale particle system support.
- "PolyGrids" (displacement maps for things like water surfaces).

All of which makes Shogo look the business!







"Blam! Validated, sucker!"



Shogo: MAD

SYSTEM: Amiga with PowerPC accelerator, 3D graphics card, 64MB RAM, CD-ROM, 400MB hard drive space. (Tested on an A1200 BPPC/BVision with 128MB RAM).

SUMMARY: A thoroughly addictive, good looking action game with plenty of depth and humour.

Your chance to pester the Editor! Write to: Amiga Active Magazine, 14 Victoria Road, Bournemouth BH1 4RR. Or, if

InterActive

Such a varied postbag this month! ...and we would've gotten away with it too, if it wasn't for you snoopin' kids!

Kids for sale

Today I purchased an Amiga mag named Amiga Active. A few days ago I thought the last Amiga mag had gone: the well loved Amiga Format. I admit the front cover put me right off - I thought it was a small child's mag.

I started a few years ago with an Amiga 500, then an A600+ and I'm now on my third Amiga, an A1200. Seeing as I'm now retired, I spend a lot of fun hours with my old pal the Amiga. Over the years I've had the best of service from a few firms, but I've also had a lot of the poor kind, so I'd like to say a few kind words about Eyetech: nothing is too much trouble, and the service is of the finest order.

Also, Amiga Format had a 'for sale' page, which was useful for Amiga parts and so on. Why don't you have one in Amiga Active?

Thank you for taking the time to read this. It is nice to know Amiga is alive in your mag.

Steven Martin

(No, not that one. We assume. It didn't come from Hollywood...)



Left: If you couldn't find a copy of AA20 in your local newsy, blame the kids.

The cartoon dinosaur was a light-hearted reference to the G-Rex card reviewed within, of course. We have no plans to turn into a kids' magazine! We just like to vary the style of our covers from time to time.

We do mirror the on-line second-hand Amiga gear site, Amibench, on our coverdisc every month, so there are plenty of classified ads to look through, just not in the magazine. A lot of people have asked us to run a 'for sale' section in AA, but we guess that there are more people who want to browse than to sell, because when we tried to go ahead with the idea we received very little interest from advertisers. Either that or they're all advertising on Amibench.

More or less.

In AA20, you spent 14 pages on various tutorials (including Active Online). Don't you think this is a bit much? Fortunately, the Linux Masterclass is finished now. I'm all for tutorials, but when your space is as limited as it is (excluding ads and the contents pages), there were only 38 pages left for other stuff. I'd rather see reviews.

Also, and more importantly, I want more games coverage! Four pages of games coverage is just not enough, especially since there is still a lot of stuff happening on the scene. Yes, I know "...we can't review products that we aren't sent..." - an excuse I'm well used to hearing, not only from your magazine, but nevertheless a fairly poor one. You simply need to make sure that the products are sent, and if the parties responsible for sending you these products refuse

54 Interactive	58 Guru	60 Online	62 Next Month	64 Back Page
Wales, wasps, kids, skins, graphics cards, reviews, games and UAE. Phew!	Read about everyone else's problems thanks to the *Amiga Active* Guru!	The Internet is about more than just e-mail and the web, you know...	Pencils at the ready, we've got a bit of a puzzler for you this time.	Brought to you this month with the letters "R" and "J"...

Back Section Contents

you enjoy the pleasures of being online, send your e-mails to us at **interactive@amigactive.com**



Above: More Games? You decide.

to do this, then you obviously have an even more important reason to investigate. I wouldn't object to some coverage of older games either. Also, I hope you're not abandoning the Active Media section, as this often helps to make up for the lack of games coverage.

"I'd rather see reviews."

Finally some praise: The reviews are generally very good, and it's nice to see that you've got both Fleecy Moss and Francis Charig to write monthly columns. I always look forward to Rants & Raves and Retroactive/Debriefing, not to mention the little blue text on page 62 - "D'you think E-Zaurus?" is the best so far. There's also something a little unconventional about you guys, which I like a lot.

To sum up, then, AA is definitely one of the better magazines around, and if you could just add a little games coverage and some cool features then it'd be perfect.

Joachim Froholt

Chasing review products takes up a fair bit of our time. We don't just sit back and wait to see what comes through the letterbox; we are always calling developers and publishers to get review products from them. Usually if we haven't got something in for review yet, it's not out yet. Occasionally the review throws back problems and the review can't be completed until they are resolved. Very rarely does anything get held back for fear of bad review any more.

Unfortunately there has been a real shortage of review products just lately. When we started the magazine we anticipated this problem, and made a decision. Rather than fill space with wasteful reviews (we could give a full page to this CD-Labelling kit...) we decided that when there was a shortage of interesting Amiga-specific or generic products (printers, etc.) we would use a flexible section size, and make up the shortfall by extending the features.

We've got a nice list of things promised to us over the coming months though, including a little more gaming coverage.



AA

Dear Editor,

Earlier today, my children were cowering in the corner of my study as wasps, probably nesting in my home's roof, swarmed into the room. One that was particularly large and healthily fierce (wasp, not child) had to be removed, and I attacked it with the nearest object. My selection of a weapon was made in a split second. It was the May issue of 'Amiga Active'. The result of a single swat was that the wasp was stunned and thrown out of the room.

"...when defending oneself against violent insects, select an alternative tool..."

However, a significant quantity of the ink on the cover ended up stuck to the paint on the wall. Fortunately my very kind decorator, Big Jim, had left a large pot of paint with the word 'Study' written clearly on the side, so with brilliant surgical skill I covered the damaged area of wall within a few minutes. Despite a satisfactory end to the event, I thought it wise for those in the northern hemisphere this summer who have purchased copies of Amiga Active to note that when defending oneself against violent insects, select an alternative tool to this magazine.

Francis Charig,
Chairman, Tao Group

Amiga Active cover inks should not normally melt when in contact with wasps. Are you sure it wasn't carrying any industrial solvents? Nor should it fuse to freshly-painted walls. We shall investigate.

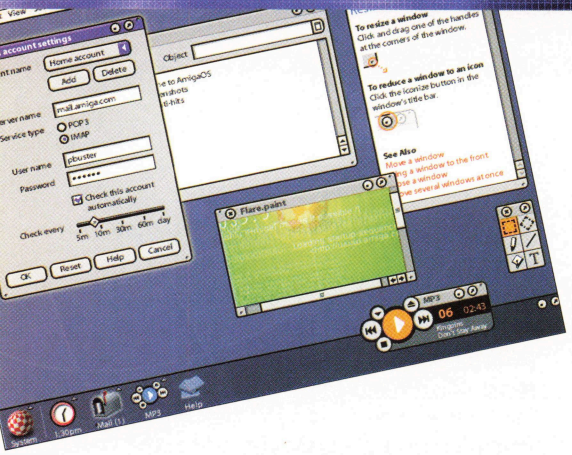
By way of compensation, please accept a limited edition *Amiga Active* t-shirt. We would have sent it to someone else so as not to be accused of favouritism, but no-one else provides us with their address any more. Clearly, they aren't that fussed. Ironically, we note that you, on the other hand, have supplied us with your address, even though we already knew it. Maybe you just wanted to be sure of winning the t-shirt? It's in the post.

Opinion from Wales

My name is Brian, a long term Amiga user from Wales. I have just purchased my first Amiga Active magazine from the shops, and while my initial thought was that it is a tad on the expensive side (to be expected really), I thought the content and layout of the magazine was very good.

For a magazine with such few pages, you certainly manage to cram a lot of information in there, and having read some of the well documented issues, I am now much better informed on what I found to be an extremely confusing subject - The AmigaOne and its new OS.

On page 21 of the magazine you showed an early prototype of the shape the new OS5's GUI was to



assume, and asked what we thought! In reply to that, I would say the new GUI looks very neat and tidy, and that it improves the look of our current OS quite substantially. What I will say though, is that the new OS needs to be as efficient and hard working as our current OS, while at the same time pushing it forward to give a more modern look and feel.

It would be very easy to splash the new OS with a million colours and lots of bolted on, slow applications like Microsoft did with their Windows package, but I hope it doesn't turn out that way. The efficiency of AmigaOS is one of the main reasons I've stuck by the machine!

Brian Hoskins, Wales

I think you've neatly summed up the unease most people are feeling. We're facing such a radical change, it's inevitable that we fear Amiga may be throwing out the baby with the bath water. It's for exactly that reason that it's reassuring that Amiga have been kept so close to the Amiga industry, hiring hard core long-term Amiga users to work on the new OS.

Gooey skin?

Hi,

Firstly I would like to say I am very, very happy about the St. Louis announcements from Amiga Inc! Pushing the AmigaOS forward as a future digital server and slowly integrating the AmigaDE is certainly wonderful news.

The second thing is that Eyetech's AmigaOne and OS 4.0 are ready for release in the summer... a whole new beginning of a bright future for the Amiga! I have seen the picture you printed of an early GUI prototype for AmigaOS 5.0 and it looks nice... but I would have loved to see a "skin-look" environment in the new AmigaOS, just like the forthcoming Windows XP!

Helge Kvalheim, Norway
(soon to become a happy owner of an AmigaOne 1200!)

Rest assured, the AmigaDE will have an extremely configurable interface. The design you saw was one of the possible flavours the new OS could come in, but there will undoubtedly be many others. Creating an interface to suit the task is fundamental to what Amiga are doing, and it will go some way beyond graphical skinning.

Charlie says...

Who says AmigaOS is old, ugly & has no software? UAEShot - as described. KillerMiggy - bit of a hoax. Sorry the drive labels are a bit poo.

P.S. AmigaOs is actually very usable with JIT-WinUAE. Now if only I could get those Windoze apps to run through Workbench like RiscOS could do...

Charles Lane



Our theory is that those are screenshots, not games! Just-In-Time compilation certainly makes a difference - see our article about WinUAE JIT on page 28 of this very issue.

AmigaOS on a PC

Will the AmigaOne be a constantly upgradable machine? I hope so, as I do like to show up anyone who thinks Windows is the only OS that can actually do anything useful. Just think how many people out there would like to run the Amiga OS reliably on PC hardware. I would love to have the power of the Pentium III in my PC to run my 3D Amiga software. How many people are fed up with the state of Windows but don't want the hassle of Linux/Unix?

Alex Harrison

The new AmigaOS won't be running on x86 immediately, although AmigaDE will. With AmigaOS 5.0 when the two strands are combined, we'll probably get it on x86. For price, availability and range of choice, it's hard to beat. However, the PowerPC road map is looking a lot healthier recently, and the PCI/AGP based AmigaOne should have all the expandability of PC hardware.

Matrox partnership

Which graphics card should be in the AmigaOne? Don't get me wrong, I like what the nVidia GeForce range of cards can do, but there's too much fixation with current benchmarks (and present 3D speed).

Amiga have chosen Matrox for a variety of reasons, the two most important being co-operation and future road map. nVidia are not an open company, they want to rule the market on their terms whereas Matrox are willing to join in with Amiga Inc.

I agree with Amiga's decision to join a company that doesn't follow the 'pixel pumping' route, but instead design graphics hardware that has extra functionality. It seems only ATI has the same approach.

Alan Buxey

...or not?

Speed is always an issue with me. There's not much point in saying that Matrox cards are bad, but they aren't fast enough for PC gamers.

Phillip Reed

The Matrox G550 card should offer a significant improvement to gamers over the older G450, but the price-point it's aimed at means it will be competing against the GeForce 2MX and the Radion VE, not against their more expensive brothers. Remember, graphics isn't just for games. What we can expect out of the G550 is market-leading performance for these non-gaming purposes. The Amiga has always been a great games machine, but perhaps more importantly an all-purpose multimedia God.

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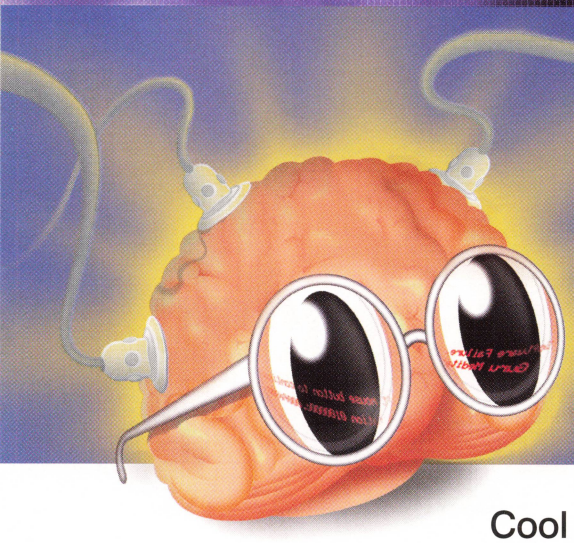
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ASK THE GURU

Cool beers on a Sunday afternoon are a distant dream for The Guru, who's stuck indoors answering your questions...



Double Vision at TV Towers



Hello Guru,

My Amiga is an 1200T, Prelude SoundCard, 32x CD-ROM, CDRW, 32MB of RAM and a 10GB hard drive.

A couple of days ago I purchased a monitor, but to connect to my tower I had to buy some kind of a converter and the first time I turned on the computer the monitor started to flicker and I couldn't see anything. I had to connect my TV to the Tower to see what has happening. The TV worked but the monitor was showing a corrupted display.

When I copied the DblPAL, VGAOnly and DblNTSC files from Sys:Storage/Monitors to Sys:Devs/Monitors and changed the setting of the monitor to "DBLPAL:High Res No Flicker" from prefs, the monitor was working with no problem, but when I try to open a picture from Opus or run a game or a demo the monitor starts to flicker again. I don't know what to do!

Saygi Boran, via e-mail

Although the problem seems complex and may look like a hardware fault, it is actually a side-effect of using modern monitors. The Amiga's standard output was originally designed to be used with televisions, and as such the refresh rate is set at 15KHz. These days, monitors are manufactured to be used with PCs, and these machines output their video at a minimum refresh rate of 31KHz.

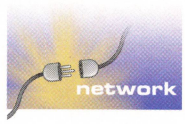
"...these machines output their video at a minimum refresh rate of 31KHz..."

Some years ago monitors were available that would work on either of these frequencies, and were known as Dual-Scan (or Multi-Sync), but these were gradually phased out as demand dropped. By using the DBLPAL settings for Workbench, the video output of the Amiga is clocked at double the rate, hence the monitor is able to cope. In order to sort this problem out, you need to set all your software to use DBLPAL. This is OK for Opus and picture viewers, but demos are hardcoded to use PAL, so the 15KHz problem reappears.

The only sure way is to install a device known as a Scan-Doubler. This fixes to your video output socket and will correct the refresh rate on 15KHz screens while anything above is simply passed through untouched. It is possible to get these units with built in Flicker-Fixers which takes the flicker away from interlace screen modes using some clever buffering circuits.

Check your local dealer or any of the companies advertising in this very issue for availability.

Which Way to the Big Blue Sky?



Hello Guru,

I am having some trouble with my new ISP (Big Blue Sky) which I'm hoping you can help with.

I have two computers connected to the only phone line into our house. One machine is my old faithful Amiga A1200T and the other is our son's 733MHz Pentium III PC. I don't have any other service like call waiting - just a plain vanilla phone line.

When trying to access Big Blue Sky on the PC, the entire connection sequence is completed successfully except at the last moment it fails with the message that either the username or password are invalid when we know this is simply not the case.

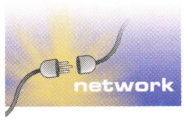
On then trying with my Amiga, Miami produces two messages having gone through all the sounds of making a successful connection. The first states, *"CHAP: Authentication failure."* In the second message it says, *"Miami is unable to configure the link level protocol. This is due to a faulty line or invalid configuration at your ISP."* So, what gives?

Bill Power, via e-mail

This is actually quite a common occurrence with Big Blue Sky. It happens at busy times when the service is being used to capacity. Other Big Blue Sky users have reported the same thing but retrying several times usually results in connection eventually.

You will find that most ISPs offering an 0800 dialup number will be similarly overloaded - that's just the way it goes, I'm afraid. In an ideal world we would all have cable connections and no more problems *[trying to put yourself out of a job? -Ed.]*, but until then, you'll just have to fight for connectivity... or pay for it!

Pick a Card, Any Card...



Dear Guru,

Can you tell me if you can still buy the Amiga on a card product that was available a few years ago as I can't find it anywhere and I would like to see what it's like?

I am also looking into getting a copy of the Siamese RTG as I think my Amigas could really benefit from it. Network PC is okay, but it could be faster.

Paul Furth, via e-mail

The card you are referring to was the InsideOut card developed by Index Information (the same people behind BoXeR, originally) who folded up their business some years ago. The card was designed for use in Point of Information systems and wasn't widely available as a retail product, so finding one now would be quite a task - maybe one of our readers can help out? If so, please get in touch...

Siamese is a good product, but it does need a fast connection between the machines to really get the best out of it. The full version will allow Serial, Ethernet and SCSI networks - the latter two being the best. The 'Lite' version of Siamese is serial only, which inevitably slows performance. A PCMCIA network card, however, can be used on the A1200 and PC cards are ten a penny nowadays. This would definitely be your best bet unless the PC is equipped with SCSI.

Old Software, New Machine?



Dear Holiness

I have an A500+ and a basic A1200. I have also just bought a 1000MHz PC with 256MHz RAM, 40GB hard drive, DVD and CD rewriter running Windoze ME.

I much prefer the Amiga and want a new up-to-date machine. I am thinking of buying a Power Tower 4, or alternatively an AmigaOne or (haha!) the mythical nonexistent BoXeR.

I would appreciate your help in choosing by giving a comparison between the three machines. For instance, the benefits of each. I would like to run all my old software on the new machine.

Tony King, via e-mail

Trying to give comparisons between hardware that doesn't exist is an extremely hard thing to do, you know. If you want to buy a machine now, you have only one choice. The AmigaOne is a couple of months away yet, but will be a forward looking solution, and with compatibility if you need it. The BoXeR is, well, anyone's guess really. If you're looking for a well-endowed classic Amiga, you may be better off perusing the classified adverts of, for example, Amibench (www.amibench.com - also see the local mirror on our CD each month in the form of the Amibench Desktop Directory). Until we see this forthcoming hardware, we really can't say any more than that!

Which AmigaOne, I Wonder?



Dear Guru,

I am the happy owner of two Amigas, one an A4000/030 in its original desktop case and the other an A1200 (rev 1D1) in a Power tower and fitted with a Blizzard 1260. Each of these has a CD-ROM drive. I am considering buying an AmigaOne when they become available and I am un-decided which of the above machines to utilise.

1. Would you please enlighten me (and hopefully many others) as to the pros and cons of these two options. I understand that the A4000 would need to be fitted into a tower case.

2. If the A1200 wins the day, can it be fitted with a High Density floppy drive?

3. The A1200 has a PC type keyboard connected to some sort of interface via a standard DIN 5 pin socket. Can my A4000 keyboard be used with the A1200 bearing in mind that the A4000 keyboard has a 6 pin miniature DIN plug, so some sort of adapter will have to be provided.

4. The A4000 is presently fitted with a HyperCOM3+ Serial/Parallel interface, could this be used with the AmigaOne or would it become redundant?

Many thanks in anticipation and thanks for an excellent magazine.

Frank D. Stephens

1. According to the original plan, yes - the A4000 would need rehousing, but Eyetech's first priority is the A1200 version of the AmigaOne. Once that it out the door, they will look at the feasibility of an A4000 version (money doesn't grow on trees - it has to be worth their while).

2. Yes!

3. Some keyboard adapters will accept either a PC or Amiga keyboard.

4. See point 1.

If you really need a full Amiga then keep the A4000 as a desktop machine, and use the A1200 with the AmigaOne.

The Guru

"Until we see this forthcoming hardware, we really can't say any more than that!"



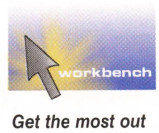
Lovely Guru will sort out the silicon



Sloppy software? Bug the Guru!



Networking & art of Zen explained



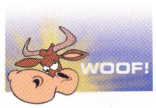
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guru@amigactive.com



Internet telephony





The Internet can be used for a lot more than e-mail and the web



The web is the Internet's most publicised application and e-mail is the most used, but there are other services available that aren't immediately obvious. As Internet connectivity becomes more pervasive, it is being used for services that were previously separate. An Internet connection is no longer limited to communicating with other 'net users.

SMS without a mobile phone

The Short Message Service (SMS) on mobile phones has become phenomenally popular, especially if you consider that it was added as an afterthought, to use up a small amount of left-over bandwidth. While a convenient way to contact someone on the move, however, sending SMS from a mobile phone has two disadvantages: the telephone keypad is a horrible text input device and there is a charge for each message sent. Both of these drawbacks can be avoided by using a computer to send the messages.

There are several web sites that provide an SMS gateway. Lycos (www.lycos.co.uk) has a gateway to send SMS to any UK mobile and you can find equivalents for just about any country through a search engine like Google (www.google.com). Lycos' SMS gateway requires some messing around with spoofing to get it working with some Amiga browsers, and it is cumbersome if you want to send more than one message. The mobile network operators have similar gateways on their own sites, for their own subscribers. These tend to suffer the same disadvantages and some, like Orange, don't work with Amiga browsers.



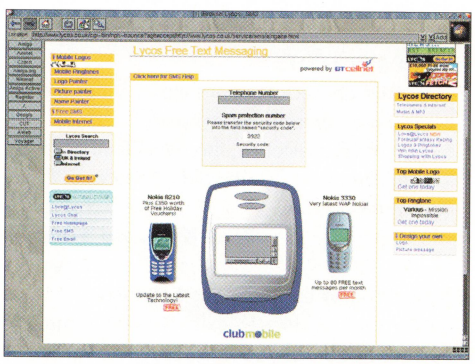
SMS without a web browser

The Amiga community is nothing if not resourceful, and several solutions have appeared. One of these is TaskiSMS, and it makes the job of sending SMS messages much easier. Setting up is easy, all you need to do is give it your name and e-mail address. It is worth taking the time to alter the plugins section of the prefs (the parts of the program used to communicate with the various servers).

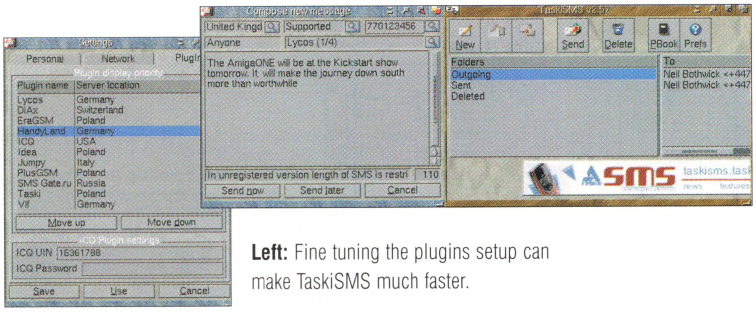
When you try to send an SMS, TaskiSMS scans the list of plugins for those that are suitable for the number you have given and tries them in order. I found the default setup always failed on the first attempt, so I moved the Lycos plugin to the top and it worked first time, every time. This was sending to UK mobile numbers - you'll need to do your own experimentation to find the best plugins for other countries.

After this is done, it's simply a matter of clicking on 'New', selecting a name from the phone book and typing the message. Messages can be written offline for later sending (another advantage over the web page approach) or sent immediately if you have an unmetered or permanent connection to the Internet. TaskiSMS is very useful, but if it had an ARexx port it would open the way to sending SMS messages from vitrually any other application with the addition of a batch of simple ARexx scripts.

"There are several web sites that provide an SMS gateway..."



Above: Sending SMS via a web page can be done from anywhere, but it's not that convenient.



Left: Fine tuning the plugins setup can make TaskiSMS much faster.

Left: Sending an SMS message with TaskiSMS is about as easy as it gets.

Just the fax

Another telephone-based medium is the humble fax. Far more businesses have faxes than e-mail - it is sometimes the only way to get information to them. Sending and receiving faxes requires the use of two different services. The Phone Company (TPC) at www.tpc.int provide a way of sending faxes via a web page or e-mail. They work in co-operation with a number of organisations throughout the world. When you send a fax, it is forwarded to the organisation covering the area you are sending to, who forward it on by conventional fax. Faxes sent to UK fax numbers are handled by Demon Internet. While this costs the forwarder for each fax they send, many companies are happy to do this in return for a banner advert at the bottom of each fax's cover page.

Sending from the TPC web site is easy, but this system really comes into its own when you use the e-mail gateway. The e-mail address you use is of the form

```
remote-printer.recipient_name
@fax_number.iddd.tpc.int
```

The recipient name is printed on the cover sheet. Underscores are converted to spaces and a slash is converted to a new line (although you can only have one). The fax number must be in the international format, without the leading "+". so, if you wanted to know why your subscription copy of *Amiga Active* had teeth marks in it, you might want to send a fax to:

```
remote-printer.Bluey_the_
mailhound/Amiga_Active
@441202411110.iddd.tpc.int
```

...then again, it may be safer to keep quiet.

There are some limitations to this service. As companies provide it at their own expense, don't expect it to be as instant as using your own fax machine. During the day, faxes may be queued until early evening.



Above: Want your very own fax number, with nothing but an Internet connection? Go here.

You should receive a confirmation e-mail when the fax has been delivered, or an error report if delivery failed. There are limits on the number of faxes you can send, so you shouldn't rely on it as part of a business, but it's fine for sending the occasional fax.

Your own fax number

Receiving faxes is another matter. A few ISPs, like Demon, have a fax-to-email gateway. They give you a fax number and any faxes sent there are sent to you as a graphic attached to an e-mail. This is free for the first year, followed by a one-off charge if you want to keep using it. An alternative service is provided by YAC (www.yac.com), who mainly provide a personal number service (a single phone number that can be redirected to wherever you want). Part of this service is fax. If your personal number receives a fax, this is sent to you via e-mail, in either TIFF or PDF format. It is extremely easy to set up: at www.yac.com, click on the 'YAC Number' button, followed by 'Sign up now'. Your number is created almost immediately and you will receive a confirmation e-mail with links to the various web pages you can use to manage it. To use the number you're given exclusively for faxes, change the default 'voice and fax' setting to 'fax only'.

YAC's service works well: faxes are delivered almost immediately, yet it is free. So where's the catch? The only catch is that the number you get is a premium rate one, charged at between 11p and 32p per minute. YAC get a share of the call revenue, which funds the service. Whilst it may be a little expensive, at least it may deter the junk fax merchants.

A YAC number can also take voice calls and redirect them to the phone of your choice. There is an option to have unanswered calls passed to an answering service with the messages e-mailed to you as WAVE or MP3 files - handy if you are on the move, as you only need to have a computer connected to the 'net to check your e-mails, faxes and phone messages in one go.

The Holy Grail?

There is another telephony service conspicuous by its absence here. Voice over IP (VoIP) is what every user of an unmetered Internet connection wants, and what the telecom companies are dreading. Because SMS and fax services go through the telecom companies' systems, they still get paid for the calls (even if it is only the last, local part).

"...don't expect it to be as instant as using your own fax machine..."

VoIP could work in a similar way, with the call travelling via the Internet until it was local to the recipient to provide a massive saving for businesses who make international calls at peak times... it's no wonder the telecoms companies don't want it.

There is software to set up a voice or video link between two computers over the Internet, but that is nowhere near as convenient as being able to "ring" any voice number anywhere in the world from your computer. Furthermore, the few companies who provide this service tend to use proprietary software that only runs on Windows (partly because of the size of the market and partly because many of the open audio systems, such as MP3, are not ideally suited to this use). Other audio formats are designed to cope with the idiosyncrasies of TCP/IP, such as later packets of data arriving before earlier ones. The quality of these systems are still relatively poor, but things are moving quickly and such systems should be with us in the not too distant future.

Neil Bothwick

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P	R	O	M	E	T	H	E	U	S	H	O
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Taking the Mical

From the origins of the Amiga to Red Jade and beyond. Does the Amiga fire still burn bright for RJ?

You don't get much more original an Amigan than RJ Mical - the man who co-wrote the epoch making Boing Ball demo and developed Intuition in just 3 weeks.

Amiga Active: What happened with Red Jade?

RJ Mical: We were developing an extremely cool bit of new technology, a wireless handheld entertainment device with full 3D and audio capabilities and expansion ports to allow telephone for voice and Internet access. Everything I've done with my career has been a variation on the same basic theme; the Red Jade device would have been the next step in that progression. Alas, that system is not to be, because our mothership pulled the funding.

The galling thing is that I know somebody somewhere someday soon is going to start work again on just such a system. I want to be part of that effort! How do I find these guys? Hey, this is RJ calling to you! Do you read me?

AA: When it comes to game platforms, does the rate of advance in technology mean that the mundane will always win out if it's launched a year later?

RJ: I don't think the mundane always wins, though the 600-pound gorilla teaches us the same lesson year after year: Cheap will always win a lion's share. Meanwhile, the Amiga and the 3DO suffered the same simple fate: Poor marketing crippled them beyond the ability to compete. These were good systems that lost the war for market share. The Amiga did better than the Mac during the first year! The 3DO had a 1.5-year lead on the competition! Yet they didn't win? Aargh!

AA: What's the next big gaming platform? The dedicated console again, or some Frankenstein's monster hybrid?

RJ: I think that one of the key flaws of the Red Jade system would have been that the system tried to be too much of too many things. It was a full game console, a full PDA, it had full Internet access and full expandability, with telecom, data acquisition, and more, including a corkscrew, a magnifying glass, and tweezers that most people would lose in the first few days. I was uncomfortable with the monster kitchen sink approach, and I would do it differently today.

AA: What did you work on at Williams? Is Eugene Jarvis really a God?

RJ: Oh yes, Eugene Jarvis really is a God. One of those soft-spoken, nicely-smiling kind of Gods who soothe you as they prepare to inflict interesting experiments on your species.

> "Yes, Eugene Jarvis really is a God."

At Williams I was one of what seems to have been about eight thousand people who worked on Sinistar (inside joke, ask me to explain sometime). I contributed to several other titles as well, and I helped knock together the first unified document describing the Williams system. My days at Williams were excellent and I worked with a host of dedicated top-quality engineers who were fine human beings as well (except for this one guy). I miss them all!

AA: Do you pay much attention to current goings-on in the Amiga market? How do you rate the plans of the current Amiga owners?

RJ: I love the fact that they're trying. I wish there was an effort that we could all get behind. I wish there was someone with enough money who wanted to put a team of us together to do Amiga again, the right way.

Currently, some are trying to bring out original Amiga hardware systems. Good luck to you guys! There are others who would use the Amiga name without using the Amiga technology. They are trading on the good-will of the name, but they have to prove themselves with the stuff they create, and until they do we can't comment much on their efforts one way or the other. All told, though, I remain delighted to see the spirit and philosophy of the Amiga alive and well lo these many years later.

AA: If you were offered $100m to revive the Amiga, what would you do?

RJ: I would jump at the opportunity, assuming the $100m is for engineering and first production run, not marketing, for which we would need an additional $50-100m.

I would begin by building a top-flight engineering team, starting with as many of the old geezers as we could afford. I would try to create a machine that could find a corner in the world that was low-cost, easily upgradeable, dedicated to staying leading edge, as unique as possible and yet compatible with a hell of a lot of things already out there. It would be a mix of the old and the new, with enough of the ancient sacred ways for us to rightfully call it The Return of the Amiga!

Who's Next?

If you'd like to know what happened to someone from the Amiga's past, write in and let us know. We'll do our best to track them down and fill you in on the details in a future issue. E-mail the Back Page section at backpage@amigactive.com or write to the usual address (see page 54), marking your envelopes 'BackPage'.

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Eyeline

Amiga news from Eyetech

July 2001

Editorial

AmigaOne-1200 Progress

The AmigaOne 1200 continues to make good progress. The second revision of the main PCB (the one which will form the basis of the production AmigaOne-1200) was manufactured during May and by the time you read this the full PCI logic will have been implemented and OS porting started. Work is well underway on drivers for SCSI, UDMA, ethernet, VooDoo3 and Matrox 450 graphics cards, as well as a PPC native TCP/IP stack and filesystem.

Kickstart show & beyond

As you may have heard on the newsgroups the Kickstart show was a bit of a disappointment in terms of the turnout with less than 100 paying visitors in total. Next year they are going to make sure it is moved to avoid conflict with exam revision timetables and mid term holidays. Keep up the good work guys. The upside was that the 5 people who went down from Eyetech really were able to give a very personal level of service to those who visited our stand!

Of course it also meant that we did not sell as much as we anticipated, so we've decided to extend the 'Kickstart Show prices by mail order' offer until the 25th July or when the stock of special show priced items is exhausted. If you want to take advantage of this offer you should send in a copy of the back page of last month's AmigActive (issue 21) with your order to claim the special prices. Please also include a day-time telephone number so we can contact you in the event that some items that you have ordered are no longer available.

The Eyetech Price Promise

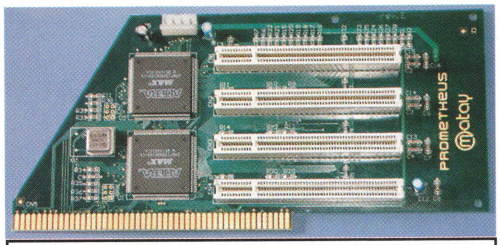
As if extending the special show prices was not enough we're also introducing a new Price Promise from the publication date of this issue. From now until the AmigaOne 1200 is launched we will offer a 5% discount off all current AmigActive-advertised prices of other Amiga dealers where both they and we have exactly the same goods in stock at the time of ordering. Hows that for an offer you can't refuse?

The Great Eyetech Givaway

We need to make more space in our warehouse for the AmigaOne boards and prebuilt systems - so some things have just got to go. Although (speaking as an honorary Yorkshireman) it goes against the grain to give 'owt fer nowt' it has to be done! We are therefore giving the following items away free of charge (and obviously without warranty or support) on a first-come-first-served basis. All we ask is that you pay a contribution of £1 per item (in stamps or coins) towards administration, and our regular carriage charge if you are not collecting the items in person.

We have the following items available, all of which are described in more detail on our website.

- Brand new MiniTower cases with 7 card-slot positions without PSU or power switch. 2 x 5.25" and 2 x 3.5" drive bays. Ideal for mounting a stand alone AmigaOne-1200 in, as a hard drive/CDROM storage expansion - or for home conversion to a high-tech pedal bin.
- Brand new and extremely stylish low profile 'net-station' cases (no PSU) with 3 x 3.5" drive bays. Ideal for drive bay expansion sitting under a desk-top case - eg an A4000D or for housing a (Linux-based) home server using an all-in-one PC motherboard. With some metalwork the case could also be used to house an A600/CD32. If you need a 5.25" bay (for CDROM etc) we can supply a matching external case for just £10.
- Brand new Amiga International A1200 cases. Perfect for updating your A1200 from its grubby Commodore case, or for rehabilitating your towered A1200 motherboard when you buy a new AmigaOne for use in standalone mode.
- Magic Pack Amiga manuals - essential for occasional reference - or to replace dog-eared orginals if you ever sell your Amiga. English and German language manuals are available.
  - Magic pack application software/games (3 manuals = 1 item) covering Wordworth, Datastore, Turbocalc, Photogenics, Personal Paint, Whizz and Pinball Mania.
  - A1200 manual set (A1200, hard drive, Workbench 3.1). 3 manuals = 1 item.
  - Technical reference set (DOS3.1, Arexx). 2 manuals = 1 item.
- Magic Pack software. 16 diskettes covering Wordworth, Datastore, Turbocalc, Photogenics, & Personal Paint productivity software (11 disks) and Whizz & Pinball games (5 disks). The software is free - you just pay for the diskettes at 25p each (=£4.00).
- Other 1-off ex Eyetech internal usage products including laser and dot-matrix printers. Believed working when last used but not tested and no warranty of any sort. Please see our website for details.



The Prometheus PCI Expansion Card for A3/4000

A personal take on the last 10 months

It is now approaching a year since I went to meet Bill at the AmiWest show in Sacramento at the end of last July and when the seeds of the new AmigaOne were first sown. At that time DCE had long since bought the rights of phase 5's BlizzardPPC and CyberstormPPC range but had failed to deliver any new PPC products (or even to undertake paid repairs of failed phase5 PPC products). Met@box, then a huge company, had promised to give us the AmiJoe PPC accelerator the previous November at Koln '99 but had subsequently changed their minds. And the Boxer project was still, well, the Boxer project. The upshot was that all the-main, remaining, Amiga dealers had big back orders for PPC products but nothing to sell to Amiga users. Something had to be done and, as the old adage goes, if you can't rely on anyone else to sort it out for you - there is only one alternative - do it yourself!

So here we are nearly a year later and what has changed? DCE still haven't delivered any PPC accelerators. Met@box has gone spectacularly bust. The Boxer project is still the Boxer project. And every Amiga dealer who doesn't have an alternative day job has lost a small fortune on their retail operations waiting to receive something to sell.

So why are we still here?

We knew 10 months ago that it was never going to be easy. Despite Bill announcing the AmigaOne at the Australian Amiga show last October it took us (all) until mid December to agree sufficiently tight specifications and contracts to enable work to start in ernest. The original was for OS3.9 to be 'fixed' to run on the AmigaOne until a PPC-native AmigaDE was available, and for the AmigaOne-1200 hardware to be available for sale in April of this year.

Of course discussions with Amiga continued after work on the AmigaOne hardware had started and it soon became clear that it would be in everbody's interest to continue the structured development of the Classic OS beyond OS3.9, culminating in a completely new, but compatible, OS5 a year or so down the track. This has inevitably had a knock-on effect on the original delivery timescales for the AmigaOne-1200 (now to be shipped with OS4.0) and first deliveries are now scheduled for 'Summer 2001 (Northern Hemisphere)'. When is summer? Well where we live it is usually a couple of days in August, so that gives you a clue. If we can bring it forward a bit we will obviously do so - we still don't have any PPC products to sell until the AmigaOne is launched!

The next few weeks

What happens until then? We are now concentrating all our efforts and resources on ensuring the AmigaOne is a successful product and has a fitting launch for the first genuinely new Amiga for around 10 years. That means we're having a major spring clean of our warehouse (see The Great Eyetech Givaway elsewhere on this page); we're extending our 'Kickstart Show special offers until 25th July (see AA21 or our website for details) and we're launching a Price Promise as detailed elsewhere on this page. It also means that I will be 100% tied up with the AmigaOne development and won't have the time to pen (or is it peck out) my Eyeline copy until the AmigaOne is in manufacture - so we are suspending our AA advertising for the next couple of months. We will of course continue to keep David Stroud, the AmigaOne mailing list (www.yahoogroups.com/group/amigaone) and our website fully up to date with progress.

This month's good news!

However things are definitely looking up. We do have some new Amiga hardware in stock at the moment, including the Predator-SE/GREX PCI expansion for the A1200, and - as of this month - the Prometheus PCI expansion for all Z3 Amigas. We're particularly pleased to have struck a deal with the Polish makers of the Prometheus board as it enables A3000/A4000 (both desktop and tower systems) to gain 4 PCI slots for trading in just one Zorro slot. The board is shipped with 2D & 3D drivers for VooDoo graphics cards (also in stock), together with drivers for ethernet and sound cards, and an complete royalty-free SDK. It is an incredibly well designed and manufactured board, (guaranteed for 5 years) and is the first PCI expansion board on any Amiga to get Hyperion's seal of approval for its 3-D support. A PPC add-in card is in the pipeline giving a PPC-based forward path for those users who want to retain Zorro 3 compatibility in their big-box Amigas. The UK price inc VAT is £199.95 (or 269 euros/239USD, both excluding VAT).

See you soon. Alan.

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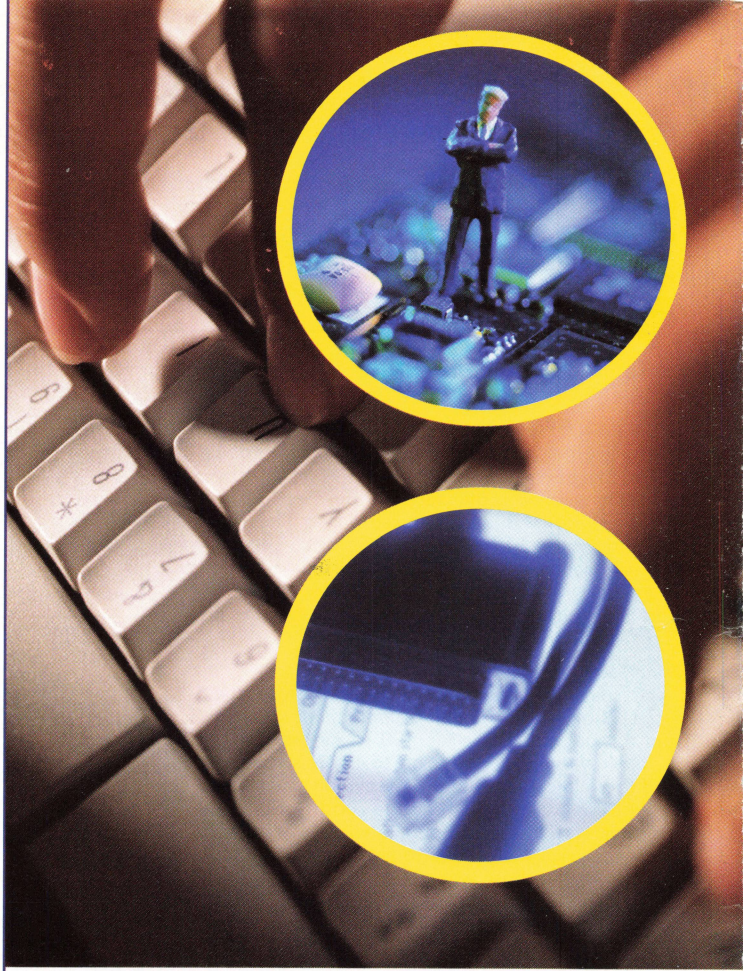
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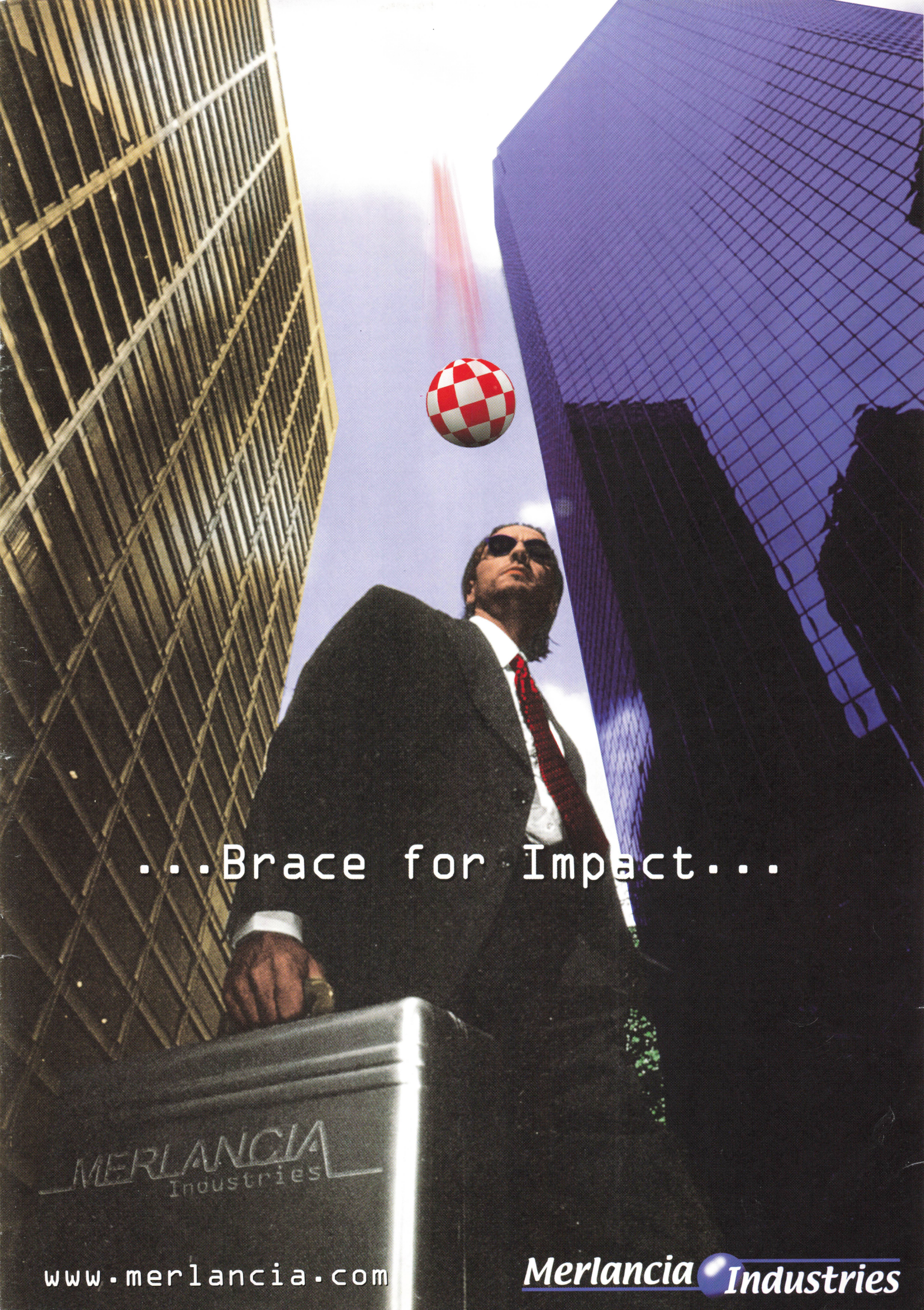
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