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AMIGACTIVE

ISSUE 25 OCTOBER 2001

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SPECIAL BUNDLE FOR A1200 ONLY!
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Turbo Print 7.16 upgrade - from v7 to 7.16 £14.95

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Original internal A1200 replacement k/board £14.95
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Parallel Port Data Switch - to connect two printers to one computer. Includes cable to connect the box to the parallel port of the computer £19.95



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The original desktop 1200, with software £99.95
Bare Motherboard inc. 3.1 ROMs
The original A1200 motherboard £94.95

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Please call for available sizes.

3.5" IDE HARD DRIVES

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If in doubt ask when ordering.

Please note that as the pre-3.5/3.9OS doesn't support HardDrives bigger than 4GB, you will need to upgrade to OS3.5/3.9 or buy an Eide99 (1200 Only) or Power Flyer EIDE interface. Both interfaces come with software overcoming ths limitation.
Note also that because 3.5" Hard Drives come with 40 pin to 40 pin IDE cable, in order to connect them to a standard A1200 IDE connector you will need to order an EIDE interface or a stack cable.
If in doubt ask when ordering.

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3.5" SCSI HARD DRIVES

9.1GB SCSI - 50-pin or 68-pin UW £159.95



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Ultraslim 8x ATAPI CD-ROM Drive complete with 4-way buffered interface & EIDE '99, Allegro s/w, cables

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Blizzard 1240 68040 40MHZ £159.95
Blizzard 1260 68060 50MHZ (for A1200 Tower only) £219.95
Blizzard SCSI-2 Kit - for 1230/1240/1260 £69.95
200MHZ PPC 603/68060 33MHz - w/o SCSI £249.95
200MHZ PPC 603/68060 33MHz - with SCSI £309.95
200MHZ PPC 603/68060 50MHz - w/o SCSI £379.95
200MHZ PPC 603/68060 50MHz - with SCSI £439.95
68060 PPC Boards available NOW!

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Cyberstorm MKIII 50MHz 68060 £469.95
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Cyberstorm PPC 604 233MHz 68060 50MHz £559.95

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Blizzard 2060 50MHz 68060 - Inc SCSI £369.95

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BVision - for PPC 603, new MK2 version £189.95
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- Comes with a complete driver package for:
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  - Voodoo 4 4500
  - Voodoo 5 5500
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- Suits all Amiga 1200 Towers

The new G-REX PCI card for Blizzard PPC 603 £149.95
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CD-ROM, RECORDABLE & REWRITABLE

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52x Speed External ATAPI - includes case with PSU, cables, 4-way buffered interface with EIDE99, Allegro CDFS software. £69.95

6x 4x 24x Internal Rewritable ATAPI (bare) £49.95

6x 4x 24x External Rewritable ATAPI £89.95
Includes external case with internal PSU and cables. Software to write to CD-R or CR-RWs and 4-way interface sold separately.

40x Speed Internal SCSI (bare unit) £89.95

40x Speed External SCSI - requires SCSI £119.95

16x 10x 32x Internal Rewritable ATAPI (bare) £99.95

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Box of 20 CD-Rs £10.00

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16x 10x 32x Internal Rewritable ATAPI £99.95
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ZIP 250
For all your backup needs!



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XL 1.76MB Internal Floppy Drive for Towers only. No patch required. £49.95

A500/600/1200 Internal 880K £19.95

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A4000 Internal 880K - inc Kylwalda £35.95

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Artec scanner bundle -
Artec AM12s, Scanquix 5.0CD and squirrel (For A600 and A1200 only) £189.95

Epson perfection 1200 SCSI - Requires a suitable SCSI interface and software (Scanquix 5.0CD) £219.95

Epson perfection bundle -
Epson perfection 1200 and scanquix 5.0CD the scanner requires a suitable SCSI interface £296.95

A1200/A4000 MOTHERBOARD ADD-ONS

Catweasel ZII MK2 - For Zorro Amigas, inc. Buddha IDE controller for up to six IDE/ATAPI devices £79.95

Catweasel MK2 - High density floppy drive controller for A1200 £49.95

Kylwalda - Allows use of a standard PC floppy drive as replacement for DF0 £14.95

Catweasel, Kylwalda & HD PC floppy drive
Special bundle inc. a high density drive £75.95

Catweasel & HD PC floppy drive £59.95

Buddha Flash - Zorro IDE controller for all Zorro Bus Amigas £49.95

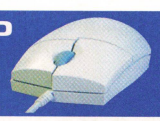
Twister MKII - Fast Serial Interface for the A1200 to improve internet access £29.95

Silver Surfer - Fast Serial Interface for the A1200 to improve internet access £29.95

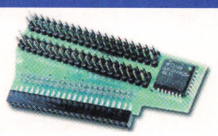
Order Special Twister or Silversurfer mechanically compatible with Mediator for an extra £10.

Please specify when ordering.

PUNCHINELLO & 3-BUTTON WHEEL MOUSE &24.95



EIDE99 4-way buffered interface with advanced feature software £24.95



POWERTOWER ACCESSORIES

new **Z-IV Bus Board** - The ultimate complement to our successful A1200 Power Tower, Pass-through and compatibility jumpers for all major accelerator cards £99.95

A4000 Original Keyboard
A replacement one, or with an adapter/int. for other Amiga models £39.95

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An inexpensive alternative to the original keyboard; requires PC key/ int. £9.95

A1200 Desktop Universal Keyboard Interface - Interface for non-towered Amiga 1200. It can use Amiga 4000 or PC keyboards £24.95

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Rotates 90 degrees the PCMCIA port to allow the use of PCMCIA cards inside tower cases £19.95

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for A4000, A3000 and A2000. Supports Multiple key-press(Keyboard sold separately) £24.95

new



Mediator PCI 1200 £149.95

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new **Bundle 1** - 56.6K V90 modem, flash upgradable with cables, iBrowse and Net & Web s/w £69.95

Bundle 2 - as above plus Silver Surfer fast serial interface £89.95

Order special Twister or Silversurfer mechanically compatible with Mediator for an extra £10.

Please specify when ordering.

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Hansol 710A 17" (.27 pitch) £125.00

Hansol 710D Dynaflat 17" (.25 pitch) £164.95

Hansol 900P 19" (.26 pitch) £179.95

These monitors cannot display the standard Amiga PAL signal unless a flicker-fixer and / or a graphics card are installed.

EPSON PRINTERS & CONSUMABLES

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PUNCHINELLO MKII PC MOUSE ADAPTOR

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Punchinello MKII £19.95

Punchinello MKII & 3 button mouse and wheel £24.95

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ELBOX PRODUCTS

Mediator Multimedia CD
Unleash the power of your Mediator with the software for sound and TV cards. (Please state model of Mediator owned when ordering.)
£24.95



MEDIATOR PCI BOARDS

Mediator PCI 1200 £149.95
4 PCI 2.1 compatible slots, 132MB's between PCI cards, ready to run with existing Amiga 68k and PPC accelerator cards
(Needs an A1200 motherboard housed in a tower case

Mediator PCI ZIV £169.95
(Needs an A1200 motherboard housed in a tower case and a ZIV bus board).

Mediator PCI for A4000 £149.95
(Only for A4000 motherboard housed in a Power tower A4000 Mk2 tower case

Mediator PCI for Amigas with Zorro !II Slots £149.95
(Only for Amiga computers with fully functional Zorro III slots.)

Special Bundle! Any Mediator PCI with the multimedia CD add £20 to the price of the mediator.

PCI CARDS AVAILABLE FOR THE MEDIATOR

3dfx Voodoo3 3000 16MB graphics card £109.95

3dfx Voodoo4 4500 32MB graphics card £169.95

Ethernet 10/100Mbps network card £24.95

new **TV video card** - Available NOW! £59.95
Watch TV on your Amiga! (Software on the Mediator Multimedia CD Sold separately)

new **Soundblaster PCI128 sound card** - Available NOW! £29.95
(Software on the Mediator Multimedia CD Sold separately)

Soundblaster Live! Player 1024 sound card available soon £49.95

Shark PPC G3/G4 750@ 400MHz - Available soon £269.95

Shark PPC G3/G4 750@ 550MHz - Available soon £369.95

TOWERS

A1200 Power Tower – Kit only
Inc. tower case, PSU, universal keyboard interface, PC keyboards, fascia for floppy drive,fitting kit and instruction manual. Ideal for Mediator PCI and GREX boards. £119.95

A1200 Power Tower 1
As above, but fully assembled and with a new 3.1 ROMs A1200 motherboard, floppy drive and mouse £219.95

A1200 Power Tower 2
As Power Tower 1, with 1230 40MHz 68030 accelerator card,8 MB of RAM, 10GB Hard Drive, 4-way buffered interface, EIDE99 and AllegroCDFS software. £469.95

A1200 Power Tower 3
As Power Tower 2, but with 16MB instead and a 52x ATAPI CD-ROM drive. £519.95

A1200 Power Tower 4
As Power Tower 3, but with a Blizzard 1240 40MHz 68040 accelerator card and 32MB of RAM instead, plus Mediator PCI, Voodoo3 3000 graphics card, Ethernet Network card with Power-LAN installation software, 15" SVGA monitor, external audio port for CD-ROM drive and speaers. £899.95

A4000 Power Tower MK2
With new redesigned bus board with 7 ZORRO II / III slots, 5 PCI slots, 1 slot video. PCI slots are activated by the optional Mediator PCI for A4000. Features also 230watt PSU, 3x 5.25" external bays, 2x 3.5" external bays, 6x 3.5" internal bays and instruction manual. £209.95

new **Bundle**
A4000 Tower with PCI bus board, Mediator & Multimedia CD. £379.95

Update Bundle for A4000 Power Tower MK1
Mediator PCI 4000 plus the new ZorroII/II and PCI busboard§§§ £229.95

IDE ENHANCEMENTS

Power Flyer A1200 Gold £49.95

Power Flyer A1200 Gold Upgrade £10.00

Socket raisers for Power Flyer A1200 £5.95

Power Flyer A4000/A3000 Gold £69.95

EIDE 99 A1200 £24.95

AMIGACTIVE MAGAZINE

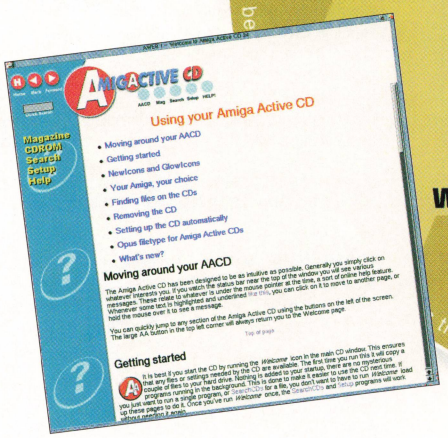
What's on this month's AACD?

Instead of a brief list of a few of the programs on the CD, we now like to give you a more detailed tour of our coverdisc's contents as well as provide you with some pointers to the regular features of AACDs that it appears many people miss out on. We want you to get the most from Amiga Active, so if you're not sure what to do with that shiny thing stuck to the front of the magazine, you've come to the right place!



Perfect Paint

If last month's TV Paint giveaway was a little too much for your needs, we have a more modest paint program this month, Perfect Paint. No, it didn't cost £800, but neither does it require gobs of RAM and a graphics card.

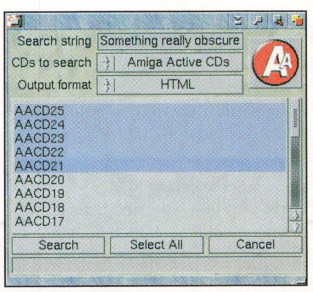


Welcome

This is the first icon you should double-click when you put a new AACD in your drive. It loads up the CD's front end and does a few important things before that, like making sure any of the scripts needed by the CD are available and that any assigns needed by software on the CD are set up. If you have the CD index files on your hard drive for faster searching, it also updates these for you, either automatically or after asking your permission, depending on your AACDPrefs.

'Welcome' won't overwrite any of your system files or touch any of your software, nor will it mess with your startup-sequence.

You should run 'Remove CD' before ejecting the coverdisc. This will cancel any assigns made by Welcome, and optionally eject the CD for you. We do our best to save you from laborious taks like pressing 'eject'!



Search CDs

Finding a particular file can be a nightmare when you've no idea which of the dozens of AA coverdiscs and Aminet CDs it could be on. The answer is to use SearchCDs. Just type in part of the file's name and tell it whether you want to search AACDs, Aminet CDs or the Aminet online index. Then select the CDs or sections you wish to search, or click "Select All" to search the lot, pick your output format and click the "Search" button.

The CD contains searchable indices of the last year's AACDs. To include older AACDs in your search, you should install the index files to your hard drive. This also makes the searching much faster. If you also copy SearchCDs to your hard disk, you can search without even putting the AACD in the drive. To put the index files on your hard disk, start AACDprefs and click on the Search tab. The rest should be self-explanatory.

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OCTOBER 2001

Assembly 2001
Top Amiga demos, including the overall winner, Lapsuus.

Perfect Paint
TVPaint too much for you? Try this.

Defender of the Crown
Another chance to play this old classic.

PlayCD Skins
For your OS3.9 CD Player.

NetInfo
A new version of this useful Internet tool.

PLUS...
Internet utilities, drivers, demos, mods, web sites... and much, much more...

Unique interface. Enhanced for OS 3.5+

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COMPACT disc DIGITAL DATA

© Pinprint Publishing Ltd. System requirements vary. Pinprint Publishing can not be held responsible for any damage that may arise from using this disc.

Demos

This month we bring you the top Amiga demos from the Assembly 01 party. This includes the overall winner, Lapsuus, written on an Amiga.

Web sites

If you don't have an Internet connection, or you don't want to wait for sites to load at modem speeds, you can now surf the net at faster-than-ADSL speed by visiting our collection of Amiga-related web sites at AACD25:AACD/Information/Websites

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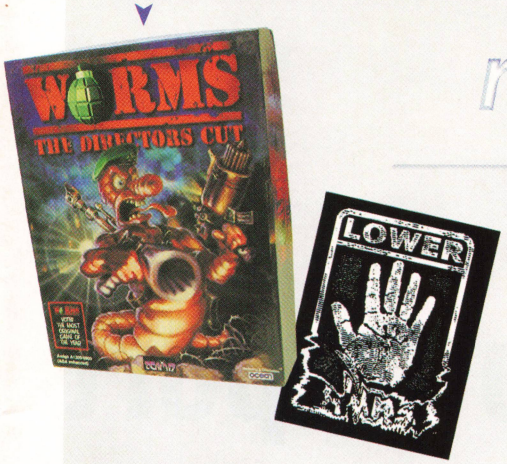

Active Gamer 50

regulars

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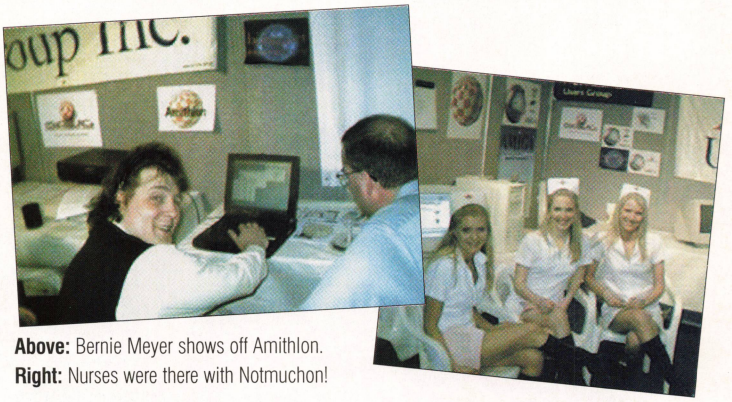
Australian IT Expo Report

The Amiga had a presence at IT Expo, Australia's COMDEX Information Technology show held on September 5th-7th, thanks to some enthusiastic Amiga User Groups. We received this report from the stand co-ordinator, Michael Czajka.

The joint Australian Amiga User groups got together to man the ADUG (Amiga Down Under User Group, www.amigadownunder.org) stand at this large business-only IT Expo in Melbourne, Victoria. The user groups were able to field:

- Classic Amiga: A1200/060, in a tower with PCI slots and PCI graphics and network cards.
- The Amithlon Emulator: This was shown running about four times faster than our G2 604e PPC Amigas. Author Bernie Meyer, who happens to live in Melbourne, was there doing demonstrations.
- A laptop running the SDK showing off the AmigaDE. Hosted on Windows with only software acceleration, it was able to run more apps (anims with rotation, shading, lighting, transparency, sound, etc.) than you could in Windows 98.

Around 35,000 people walked through this expo. We were non-stop all three days, had a huge amount of interest in all three machines and estimate that we gave out over 1500 leaflets. We were much more successful than we anticipated. Not only were many passers-by interested (50 percent were current or ex-owners) but we were able to get many of the exhibitors to come down and take a look at the next generation hardware agnostic AmigaDE: Sharp didn't realise their Zaurus ran Amiga apps! AMD didn't know Amithlon ran on a 1.3GHz Athlon! Many other firms found that the AmigaDE offered things like thin Internet applications (apps that don't take much bandwidth) which they need. People went away suitably impressed.



Above: Bernie Meyer shows off Amithlon.
Right: Nurses were there with Notmuchon!

Not only have we had large articles in our largest dailies leading up to the show, but they are now following up with additional articles about the stand and what they saw. We now wait with baited breath for 3rd November and the release of new hardware and software. Oh how we envy the London denizens, who get to see it first.

Pictures from the show (some of which are reproduced here) can be found at

http://boing.net/comdex/

Prepare for AmigaOne

Following requests from customers and other dealers for an AmigaOne-ready A1200 tower system, Eyetech have put together a "bare bones" configuration ready for end-users to add their own peripherals to build into a customised system. It consists of:

- EZTower-Z4 with ATX PSU
- Fully fixed A1200 motherboard (i.e. the Alice, timing & video tearing faults present in many of the Amiga International produced motherboards have been tested and fixed as necessary).
- 3.1 ROMs (fitted)
- Floppy drive & cable (fitted)
- EZKey-XS A4000/PC keyboard adapter (with keyboard operated PSU switch) (fitted)
- EZIDE 4-device buffered i/f & 44-way cable (fitted)
- LED adapter (fitted)
- MagicPack software & manuals
- OS3.1 software & manuals
- CD-ROM software
- Amiga mouse

The system only requires the addition of an AmigaOne motherboard/support cards, hard drive, CD-ROM and keyboard to make it into a complete, next gen Amiga.

Alternatively the "bare bones" system can be used as the basis of a classic Amiga tower system by the addition of hard drive, accelerator and keyboard, and, optionally, the Z4 busboard expansion or the Predator-SE or GREX PCI busboards.

The Eyetech Barebones EZTower system is available direct from Eyetech ex-stock at an introductory price of £199.95 inclusive of VAT, or from your local Amiga dealer.

www.eyetech.co.uk

editorial

More Real-Time Strategy



French developers Melina Softworks, who have produced shareware and freeware applications in the past, are moving into the commercial games development arena with a real-time strategy game called Voodoo Wars, for the AmigaOne and high-end classic Amigas.

The game will not run on AGA, running at a minimum 640x400 in 16 bit colour. Sound effects will be 16 bit, and music will be in MP3 format. The game is expected to be PowerPC only, although Melina are currently saying it may come to 68k.

The game will play in four modes: Campaign mode allows players to run through a standard RTS campaign, Scenario mode will offer them a variety of pre-set scenarios to play, Duel mode allows them to play against an opponent either to the death or to be first to reach some predetermined goal, and Team Mode, which allows players to work together in any of the previous three games. Multiplayer networking will be supported through TCP/IP.

www.melinasoftworks.fr/fm

Listen Up, Soldier



Pagan Games have set up a mailing list for discussion of tactics, gameplay and updates relating to the real-time strategy game Earth2140.

The developers of the Amiga version are present on the list to answer any questions you may have about the game, so sign up now, soldier! Send a blank e-mail to pagan-e2140-subscribe@yahoogroups.com or go to Pagan's web site if you need assistance - although if you require help with such a simple task, chances are you shouldn't be playing the game in the first place! What is your major malfunction?!

www.pagan-games.com ▶

Mind The Gap

What do you want to play today? Get used to answering this question, because it's one you'll be asked more and more over the coming months. Mobile games developers are springing up all over the place, middleware providers are striving to provide comprehensive games development tools and hardware manufacturers are pushing online, networked gaming as the Next Big Thing. This is no ill-conceived coincidence.

If you need convincing, take a look at our interview with game developer Edivision - who recently signed up to produce content for the AmigaDE - on page 50 of this very issue. Then, flick back a few pages to our feature on Terraplay (page 33) who will be providing an advanced, cross-platform networking solution for intent. Recall, if you will, last issue's features on MathEngine and the Open Contents Platform Association - whose inaugural meeting is scheduled for the beginning of October.

Content, middleware, hardware - all on the same track. No single one of these companies can get very far on their own, but together they are able to offer something of real value: entertainment. Some of you may be questioning *Amiga Active*'s recently increased focus on this area of computing - and on the basis of today's handheld offerings, you would be right to fear change. But today's PDAs are all very work oriented with their contact managers, diaries and calculators. Worth getting out of bed for if you're a suit, maybe, but most of us would prefer to see something a little less pinstripe and a lot more pinball. Yes, you can get freeware, two-colour, low-res golfing sims for your Psion or Minesweeper clones for your Palm (excuse me if I snore too loudly), but let's get serious for a moment.

You watch TV, you might have Sky, you could even be the proud owner of a DVD player or a games console. These devices all compete with each other to provide you with high quality entertainment in return for a few hundred quid of your hard-earned cash. Today's handhelds do not. We realise this. We share your skepticism about mobile gaming being the short-term saviour of the Amiga. That's why we're here - to guide you swiftly through the crowded tube train of electronics manufacturers, middleware providers and content developers to your ultimate destination: entertainment. It should be an enjoyable ride.

David Stroud, Editor.



News in brief

Kicksoft news

Kicksoft Ltd has a limited number of Drawstudio 2 manuals in stock for just £5 on a first come, first served basis. Meanwhile, image viewer Metaview is still available for just £15. For the latest info, visit the Kicksoft web site.

www.kicksoft.co.uk

SimpleMail 0.9

A new version of Amiga e-mail client SimpleMail has been released, with an improved address book and periodical download facility.

http://simplemail.sourceforge.net

Evil Frogger

Frogger 1.66(6), the MPEG video player for PowerUp, WarpOS and 68k Amiga systems is now available for download. A MorphOS version is nearing completion and may be available by the time AA25 hits the shelves.

http://frogger.rules.pl

New AmIRC Beta

Vaporware have released a new public beta of their Internet Relay Chat (IRC) client AmIRC. Version 3.5.19 is now available on the Vapor homepage.

www.vapor.com

Repulse drivers

New drivers for the Repulse soundcard (reviewed in issue 24 of *Amiga Active*) are now available on the product's homepage. Completely new Toccata emulation, support for MovieShop and a fix for SoundFX are all part of the package.

www.aliendesigngbr.de/repulse/

Photogenics best?

Paul Nolan Software has become Idruna Software and Photogenics (albeit the Pocket PC version) has been nominated by Pocket PC Magazine in the "Best Graphics Design/Drawing Software" category. Always nice to see software which originated on the Amiga making a name for itself in other markets...

http://www.idruna.com

fxSCAN OCR

Innovative has announced that the source code for the OCR engine (based on the GPL'd gOCR 0.2.7) is available on their FTP server. fxSCAN itself remains a commercial product, of course.

Innovative say they plan to cooperate closely with the developers of gOCR in future, and are currently working on integrating a version of gOCR 0.3.8 into fxSCAN to provide enhancements in special character recognition and speed.

www.innovative-web.de

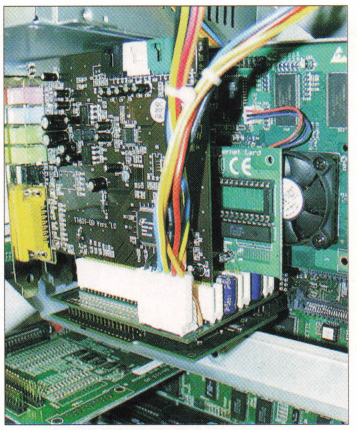
Floating on Airsoft

Airsoft, it appears, have been rather busy of late, releasing several new pieces of software on their web site.

CD32 Games Install Kit 4.5NG, Search 1.2, LaunchHTML and PlayMOD are all available for download from Airsoft's home page, although the former can only be accessed by registered owners of Airsoft's "Best of" Gold Edition CD-ROM. Search 1.2, LaunchHTML and PlayMOD are all freeware. For more details on these utilities, visit the Airsoft web site.

www.airsoftsoftwair.de

PCI comes to the A4000T



DCE has announced that the G-REX A4000T PCI busboard should be available by the time you read this.

The board is designed to fit inside an A4000T case, and connects to a CyberVisionPPC card providing three DMA capable PCI slots.

AmigaOS XL?



US company Errorwear make T-shirts with computer error messages on them.

If this kind of über-geekery appeals to you, you'll no doubt be glad to hear that they are considering launching a T-shirt decorated with the Amiga's very own "Guru Meditation" error message. Pop over to their web site and be sure to click on the "coming soon" link.

www.errorwear.com

WoASE Ticket Winners

In issue 23 of *Amiga Active*, we announced - on the subscriptions page - that three randomly selected subscribers would be getting a pair of tickets to this year's World of Amiga show. Those lucky people are...

- Adam Eccleshall, Surrey
- Mark Brown, Northumberland
- Stephen Scoffham, Warwickshire

Congratulations, your tickets are in the post!



Downloading...

What are people downloading from the web these days? Unfortunately, there's no way of us knowing for sure. But we do know what the top 15 downloads from Aminet were during August...

pix/3dani/Enterprise.mpg	2.3M	USS Enterprise fly by Planet....
gfx/show/SoftCinema.lha	474K	Ultimate Movie Player (PPC)
util/virus/V0.14xvslibrary.lha	57K	External Virus Scanner Library
mus/play/v33.31EP_TFMX.lha	10K	EaglePlayer "TFMX" external
util/libs/replayermui38usr.lha	1.0M	MagicUserInterface 3.8, user
pix/imagi/fileseser_tie.jpg	63K	Tie-Fighters In Asteroid Field
util/wb/sgrab.lha	95K	Screen grabber with GUI (1.18)
pix/wb/Breaking.jpg	253K	A Boing wallpaper for your WB
game/demo/AquaDemo.lha	2.5M	Aqua demo version of great new adventure
comm/net/GoPortscan.lha	114K	V0.5.1 TCP Portscanner with MUI interface
comm/mail/YAM23.lha	691K	MUI Internet mailer V2.3 (main)
comm/tcp/Tango.lha	121K	Samba/smb-handler gui.
pix/back/A4kPPC-BG.jpg	587K	1152x900 24bit WB-Background Pic
mods/mpg/lnsM34_Blow.mpg	3.8M	Operating with a blown mind - Goa (Track
game/think/SameGame.lha	15K	Addictive puzzle game with coloured balls

AMIGACTIVE MAGAZINE

Reader Survey 2001

For those of you who didn't notice the number 25 on this issue's cover, allow us to draw your attention to the fact that this is our quarter-century issue. We're extremely pleased to have survived for two years, especially when there were people saying we'd only last three months. To survive to a half-century, however, and provide you with the best quality Amiga news, reviews and features for another two years, we'd appreciate your suggestions and assistance.

Those of you who have Internet access may be aware of our website survey which asked you to rate our covers and past articles, but this survey is a different kettle of fish. We'd simply like you to provide us with a little more feedback on your Amiga setup and other such things. Photocopies of this page will be accepted, and please feel free to ask those who also read your copy of *Amiga Active* to respond as well.

As a little bonus, those of you who provide us with your address (or subscriber identification code) will have a chance of bagging yourselves a year's subscription to the magazine, so you get to see our next 12 issues for nothing. We've got two subscriptions up for grabs - and if you're already a subscriber, we'll just add another 12 issues to your subscription if your completed survey is pulled out of the mailbag. Editor's decision final, any complaining and we'll send Bluey round, etc.

You've got until December 31 2001 to submit your responses! Thanks, and Good Luck!

1) What kind of Amiga do you own? Tick any that apply.

- ☐ None
- ☐ A1200 desktop
- ☐ A1200 tower
- ☐ A4000 desktop
- ☐ A4000 tower
- ☐ Other... specify: _____

2) Which 68k processor is at the heart of your Amiga (or most used Amiga, if you have more than one)?

- ☐ 68020
- ☐ 68030
- ☐ 68040
- ☐ 68060

3) Do you own any of the following Amiga addons (tick any that apply)?

- ☐ Extra RAM... amount: _____
- ☐ Monitor... size: _____
- ☐ PowerPC accelerator
- ☐ BVision/CVision graphics card
- ☐ Other graphics card... specify: _____
- ☐ Hard drive(s)... total space: _____
- ☐ CD-ROM drive... speed: _____
- ☐ CD re-writer... speed: _____
- ☐ Zip drive
- ☐ Modem... speed: _____
- ☐ Printer... make: _____
- ☐ Scanner... make: _____
- ☐ PCI busboard... make: _____
- ☐ Any PCI cards... specify: _____

4) Tell us a little more about your Amiga system. Boot your Amiga, go into a shell (CLI) window and type "showconfig" *(without the quotes)*. Tell us the following:

Kickstart version: _____
Exec version: _____

Pop into Sys:prefs/screenmode and tell us your Workbench screen resolution *(highlighted):*

_____

5) Besides Amiga hardware, what other devices do you own, or intend to buy in the next six months?

Own	*Intend to buy*	
☐	☐	PSone
☐	☐	Dreamcast
☐	☐	PlayStation2
☐	☐	Gameboy Advance
☐	☐	Nintendo GameCube
☐	☐	XBox
☐	☐	Mobile phone... type: _____
☐	☐	PDA... type: _____
☐	☐	Laptop... type: _____

Anything else? Please specify:

_____

6) How interested are you in the following topics:

Very	*Slightly*	*Not Really*	*Not At All*	
☐	☐	☐	☐	Classic Amiga reviews
☐	☐	☐	☐	Classic Amiga tutorials
☐	☐	☐	☐	Classic Amiga programming
☐	☐	☐	☐	AmigaDE reviews
☐	☐	☐	☐	AmigaDE tutorials
☐	☐	☐	☐	AmigaDE programming
☐	☐	☐	☐	Games
☐	☐	☐	☐	Applications
☐	☐	☐	☐	Hardware
☐	☐	☐	☐	Programming
☐	☐	☐	☐	3G mobile services
☐	☐	☐	☐	Handhelds
☐	☐	☐	☐	Games consoles

7) Which is your favourite Amiga Active cover to date?
Issue no: _____ **And why?...**

_____

8) Finally, any other comments? Feel free to use another sheet of paper and attach to your completed survey.

_____

If you wish to be entered into the draw for a chance to win a 12 month subscription to Amiga Active, please provide us with your address or Subscriber ID:

Name: _____ **Subscriber ID:** _____
Address: _____

Post Code: _____
Email: _____
Phone: _____

Age Group: *Under 20* ☐ *21-25* ☐ *26-30* ☐ *31-35* ☐ *36-40* ☐ *41-50* ☐ *51+* ☐

☐ *Tick the box if you do not wish to have your details added to Pinprint's database. We will not pass your details on to third parties.*

Thank you for completing this survey. Please photocopy or cut out this page and return to:

Amiga Active 2001 Survey
Systems House
14 Victoria Road
Bournemouth
BH1 4RR
England.

Rants and Raves

What we think about what we know.

Start Making Cents

Making sense of - and money from - on-line ads.

Few companies setting up Internet content providers have anything approaching a sensible plan of action. The directory service is a great idea in theory as it ties directly into a profit area, but in practise they tend to either be so small that nobody actually knows about them or so big that they don't really make it much easier to find what you are looking for (unless, of course, it is niche specific - something like www.amiga.org).

Portal providers frequently forget that they need something unique and useful to attract visitors. Many web sites coming from the media market end up competing with the same company's old media products rather than enhancing them. However, the big problem is advertising - which, in theory, is how these companies will make money.

On-line advertising is a major money-spinner. It may come as a surprise given all the doom and gloom, but the fact is that the total amount of money spent on Internet advertising is still increasing a little. There's less per site, true, but any increase is bucking the current trend in other media. To deal with the vast number of web sites around, most advertising is bought and sold through advertising brokers, who sell through to web sites of any size, paying by volume. Much to the annoyance of the advertisers, this simply hasn't produced the results they had hoped for - and thus the amount they are willing to spend on these untargeted ads is dropping.

Looking for solutions

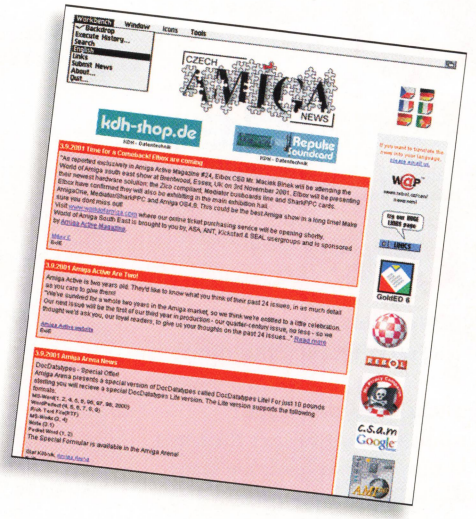
As a result, the advertising brokers have looked hard at how to improve the effectiveness of their advertisements, and the current hot idea is the pop-up advert, which opens a new browser window in front of what you are reading. Banners are, after all, very easy to ignore. The advertising brokers charge more - and pay more - for pop-ups than for banners, because they produce more click-throughs. The advertisers, as with so many of the other dotcoms, are badly missing the point.

Success of an advert on the Internet is measured according to click-through or sell-through. If people aren't clicking on the advert so they can go and order from your website, the advert is considered a failure. Yet nobody ever judged a TV advert that way. The advertisers need to understand that all important point that it is content that makes the Internet - it's not just a shopping channel.

Advertising on a television content channel is usually just about putting an idea into your head - so why have I never read a web page with a small advert for Coke at the top of the page? Not too many people are going to order a can of Coke from an e-commerce web site, but not too many people order one through the TV either.

"...it is content that makes the Internet - it's not just a shopping channel."

One of the major problems with on-line advertising is poor targeting. If you want to advertise cosmetics on TV, you'd prefer to have it during the evening movie or the afternoon chat show rather than in the middle of a rugby international; the same logic barely filters through onto the Internet. What makes things more complex is that the Internet is a thoroughly international community, yet all to many advertisers seem unaware of this. I have no problem with buying a book or a CD from an American retailer, but while they insist on using NTSC and 110 volts, I'm not going to be buying their TV sets.



Finding a niche

Adverts for on-line casinos aren't going to go down well at the gambler's anonymous web site, and a banner for an English speaking company won't do too well on a Francophone web site. On the other hand, pop over to www.ann.lu or http://amiga.realdreams.cz and you'll see adverts for Amiga products, from retailers used to dealing with overseas ordering. They are able to do this because they provide content to a niche audience and sell advertising directly to companies targeting the same.

For Internet advertising to really start working, the process will have to change, following two basic models. The first will be targeted advertising rather than semi-random advertsising brokering. This in turn will require more targeted content - web sites that appeal to a specific demographic rather than attempting to appeal to as many people as possible, just as the aforementioned Amiga sites do - and through generic advertising such as brand-name promotions.

The Internet is an entirely new medium, which offers possibilities that simply did not exist before. For companies to succeed on the Internet, they will have to understand what the real benefits of this new medium are. Undoubtedly the Internet offers new sales methods, but these are not always appropriate. Embracing the new requires careful thought and planning, and for it to be a success, it also requires not forgetting the tried and tested methods of the past.

Andrew Korn

Interact

Agree? Disagree?

If what you've read on these pages has made you think, we'd like to hear your views. Write to us or email the usual address...

interactive@amigactive.com

Control of the Community

When will the community get the respect it deserves, asks Amibench's Mark Wilson?

People like me no longer have blind faith in Amiga Inc. Our once bright future is again dancing on a knife-edge. Love them or hate them, Amiga still seem to have problems making their minds up. I can't keep count of how many times they've made new announcements only to change them three months later.

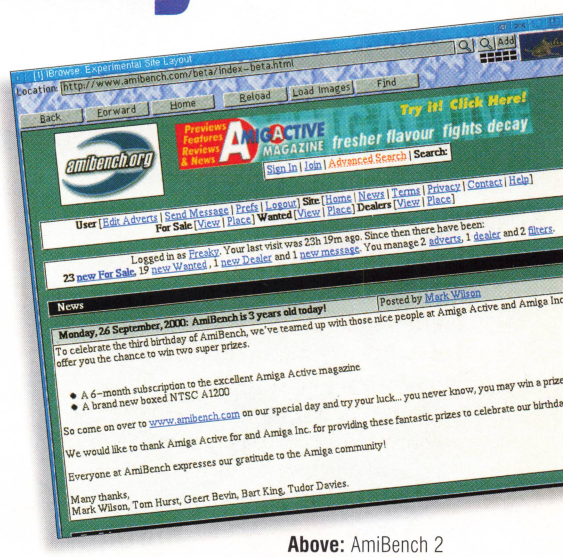
When I heard about AmigaOS XL, I thought it was a new range of T-shirts - can you imagine my horror when I found out it was a version of UAE running on QNX? Oh my! Classic Amiga users are not going to like this, are they? Is it going to sort out the Amiga's problem? In short: no.

The only people who are going to buy it are retro-computing fans, and die hard Amiga nuts (I'm one...). It does not breathe any much-needed new life into the Amiga; to the contrary, it makes people carry on using the classic OS, which Amiga are supposed to be replacing with a PPC-based OS.

It makes you wonder if Amiga Inc. is still in control of the Amiga, its community and its once bright future. I sometimes think that it is due to the effects of ill thought-out announcements that we have lost some of our strongest assets in this little and now fragile community.

I've seen many special Amiga people leave the community after they couldn't hang on any longer. I'm talking about people like Peter and Michael Price - do you remember them and their Amiga web site, Amiga Universe? Some of the Amiga community's best resources were left out in the cold, with no support from vendors and Amiga Inc. It became too barren for them to carry on. If I had to rely on sponsorship adverting like, for example Amiga News Network (www.ann.lu) do, I'd probably have pulled the plug on AmiBench. You know, a little thanks from the people upstairs would go along way in repairing the damaged morale of people like me who are running community services.

"...a little thanks from the people upstairs would go a long way in repairing the damaged morale..."



Above: AmiBench 2 - coming to a browser near you... hopefully.

Community is the key

I think Amiga Inc need to learn that Amiga community's web sites (no matter who runs them) are a very valuable asset to the future of the Amiga. If they don't nurture them, then they'll wilt and their precious community will follow. In the four years that AmiBench has been going, lots of things went wrong. The domain name got trapped, my host was hacked twice and then they set my website to 0 bytes in size! The hosting account was closed as it was way too expensive to run. Version 2 hasn't yet gone live... can you imagine how stupid I felt when nothing happened after *Amiga Active*'s last article on AmiBench back in issue 15?

AmiBench 2 will happen one day. It has to happen. Mainly because I feel that I still owe the Amiga Community a great deal. While I'll never tell you all the reasons why I feel I owe you all so much, the simplest one is that through the Amiga and its community, I met my future wife - and yes, she does know! I still have high hopes for AmiBench and the community of sites that it is - very slowly - spawning. We launched our second site this year without much of a fanfare (mainly because it didn't need it), but for those of you who aren't aware of it yet, take a look at www.amigaforums.com.

Can you believe that in the four years since AmiBench started, hardly anything has changed? Users are still leaving, just as before. Day by day I see new adverts from people selling up. You have to ask why, after all this time, they suddenly can't bear to keep their Amiga, which in some cases represents a huge investment. Don't you think it's weird how a bit of mid 90's computer hardware encased in yellowing plastic can get so entrenched in our hearts and minds?

I hope the Amiga does make it, I really do. I'll buy AmigaOS XL, because I don't have a classic machine any more. I use Amiga Forever a lot nowadays as it performs almost as well as my old Amiga. Does this mean I'm a traitor to all you Amiga users? I hope not. Does this mean that I'll give up holding the torch that I have for AmiBench and its very loyal following?

Of course not.

Which leaves me with nothing more to say, except thanks so very much in being part of what I created.

Mark Wilson, AmiBench

WE ARE 2!



You should all know how *Amiga Active* started its life by now - if not, look back at the lead feature in issue 13: previewed at World of Amiga 1999, born from the ashes of CU Amiga's demise, lit by a spark in the most unlikely of places: Pinprint Publishing, Bournemouth. Unlikely, because a certain CU coffee-brewer and freelancer lived just fifteen minutes' drive away. Pinprint wanted to venture into magazine publishing - and, noticing the gaping hole in the Amiga market, stepped in to fill people's half-empty glasses and make a toast to the future of Amiga computing.

Led by the fearless Mark Hinton (some say he left his fear in London after a particularly traumatic weekend when he overdosed on Jelly Babies) and headed up by ex-CU Amiga Magazine Deputy Editor Andrew Korn, a handful of journalistically qualified and perhaps medically certifiable Amiga nuts - including David Stroud, Neil Bothwick, Jason Compton and Simon Archer - set out on their path to fame and fortune.



Who'd have thought the Amiga would have still been in with a chance in the 21st Century? We obviously did... and we still do.

Plead the fifth

"Let's produce a magazine to activate the Amiga community!" they proclaimed as one. *"We're sick of those A500 users and their pitiful excuses for not upgrading their machines and buying the latest software. Who needs to eat and buy groceries? If people want to stay in the Amiga market - if there's going to BE an Amiga market this time next year, people need to get serious about using their machines. Right?"* Realising there was no-one around to answer their collective questioning, except Bluey (who was sleeping, a trend set to continue, despite efforts to inject a little enthusiasm by promoting him to Office Mailhound several months later), the team reached an unanimous verdict. It was decided: the glint in their eye would be named *Amiga Active*, it would define a new era in computing, and would take the form of a 76 page magazine full of quality journalism but without a fifth colour for the prestigious awards they were to bestow upon various products, because they couldn't afford it.

Producing the first issue was a rollercoaster ride that went on about ten times longer than expected - we had sorted out the financing and print costs, decided on a structure and layout and started waiting for the copy to come rolling in, at which point the magazine's first designer realised he was in too deep and did a runner, leaving some under-qualified Quark Xpress novices who should have been doing other things (like getting some sleep) to pull together the entire first edition.

By deadline, none of us had a clue how the finished magazine would look once printed. When we got them back, we were quite surprised to see all the pages in the right order, with all the words and pictures (bar a couple) present and correct. Comparing and contrasting the first issue to the one you're holding now proves little - only that we've sorted out a ton of problems with the production and printing of Amiga Active to make the whole process a little less stressful and the finished result more pleasing on the eye. Oh, and advertising doesn't grow on trees. With over 16 pages of the first issue trying to sell you stuff, we were confident that we could survive into 2000. With the news of Gateway axing the Amiga, we thought we might have just produced our last issue. With the knowledge of Bill and Fleecy's plans, we knew we could make something of our dreams if only they could be kept alive.

More than a magazine

But this, dear reader - what you are holding in your pale, quivering hands - isn't what we've made of our dreams. It's not even a twenty-fifth of it. For *Amiga Active* is more than a monthly magazine - it's a monthly CD, a web site (that we wish we had time to update more than once a month)... and it's you. If you're reading this now, it means you're active in the Amiga community. You are *Amiga Active*. Like the Borg, we are one. But unlike Microsoft, we appreciate the individuality of everyone within the Amiga community. We welcome those of you who have ideas for features, we are happy for those of you who learn new things in reading one of our Masterclasses, and we smile at those who write in to tell us they've travelled many miles across frozen wasteland to buy the magazine in Finland.



"So, instead of looking at the past through sepia-tinted spectacles..."

Those of you reading this now have more than likely read *Amiga Active* over the last year. We recognised this, and, in preparing this feature, decided that we shouldn't insult your intelligence by providing you with an overview of the last twelve issues. Sure, it would be nice to reminisce about the last year - but you can do that by leafing through our back issues - and for those of you without many back issues, there's still some available, so invest in a little piece of history today by filling out the order form on page 57 or giving us a call on the usual number. We'd tell you that you knew it made sense, but we've already vowed not to insult your intelligence, remember?

So, instead of looking at the past through sepia-tinted spectacles, let's stretch our imaginations and what we could see if we had knocked up a quick chronomobile from used breakfast cereal packets, experimented with relative time dilation in an amazingly compressed space or, in the Editor's case, not watched so much Red Dwarf on UK Gold and got on with it.

Future number one

The first of our possible futures is the one we all hope fervently will not come to pass. The pear-shaped future, The One Where it All Goes Horribly Wrong. In this future Amiga missed their November 1st deadline. The Amiga community grumbled, but wasn't surprised. When Christmas came and went with nothing to show, the rumour mill started churning. The nay-sayers foretold imminent doom with glee, the zealots shrugged it off as a minor delay. The rest of the community looked on in ever-deepening depression.

Then, little more than two years after the adventure started, the word on the street is that Amiga Inc. are no more. For many users this is the final straw - they think it's all over, and it is now. Within a couple of months any company planning any investment in the Amiga market

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO US!



"October 2002 and the magazine you are holding is called What Toaster..."

had pulled out. Negotiations started between Tao Group and some of the individual contractors for Amiga over some of the Amiga generated IP, but legal complexities tie the whole thing up and this last possible legacy of the Amiga falls by the wayside.

October 2002 and the magazine you are holding in your hands is called *What Toaster (incorporating Amiga Active)*. The star product is a Tefal Breadburner 2000, and the Amiga Active section at the back is down to eight pages - all of them featuring the return of RetroActive. Dave Stroud is still Editor, but he comes into the office less and less now that he has to spend so much time in the rehab clinic. Publisher Mark Hinton is publisher no more; he managed to flog the title to a large German publishing house in August having somehow convinced them that they were buying FHM, and now owns a small Greek island. Neil Bothwick is now compiling the cover CDs for Acorn User, and consulting editor Andrew Korn? He hasn't answered the phone in three months.

Future number two

We call this vision of the future "Always look on the bright side." In this future, things start off pretty much according to the vision above except for one crucial detail: the AmigaOne. Just as things started turning pear-shaped, up popped Haage and Partner and Eyetech to say, *"actually, you know, we've got everything we need right here, guys..."*

The shock of losing another Amiga Inc. was somewhat offset by the arrival of PowerPC Amigas, running a PowerPC version of the classic Operating System. There was, of course, another wave of departures from the market, but the injection of interest the new machines created actually caused the market situation to improve.

This brief revival of a niche system would not be able to sustain itself. However, Amiga Inc's plans for the future were not lost. While the community was reeling between shock at Amiga Inc's latest collapse to pleasure at their shiny new AmigaOnes, a group of companies in the Amiga market along with several people from Amiga Inc. were hammering out plans with Amiga's original investment company and Tao Group. Under this arrangement the Amiga name would survive, and the developments of Amiga Inc. on the AmigaDE would continue through Tao Group in collaboration with some of the Amiga Inc team and with the support of the Amiga companies.

October 2002 and *Amiga Active* is reviewing the first release of the intent Amiga Platform Edition for Windows, Linux and AmigaOS4.x. This is Elate with a desktop environment, Component Object Model (COM) and additional multimedia libraries, using the software developed by Amiga Inc. It's a nice platform for the enthusiast, with some great features. It's also getting interest from the OCPA members, particularly for the multimedia APIs and the Component Object Model. Some companies may take the whole thing, others might want to license specific components only to run on intent. The future isn't looking so bad after all.

Future number three

This is the future of Things Going Pretty Much According To Plan. This is the future where the AmigOne came out on October 31st, just allowing Alan Redhouse to pat himself on the back for beating November 1st. Amiga delivered the applications they promised, although with one or two features missing. A few people moaned, but pretty much everyone was satisfied - new machines, real, tangible progress at last.

Sales of the OS4.0 platform weren't huge, but were more than acceptable. Amiga users started spending the money they'd been saving for the past few years, and a few old-timers returned, causing a mini-boom for Amiga companies, and a helpful revenue boost to Amiga.

The AmigaDE was well received, and the list of OEMs started to increase. Amiga Inc. had overcome the first and hardest hurdle - they had taken the AmigaDE through development and into the market, and revenue streams from those OEMs were starting to provide them financial self-sufficiency.



In this version of the future, the October 2002 issue of *Amiga Active* has a busier review section than any previous issue. The AmigaOne has been out for almost a year, and the applications - games, word processors, graphics packages and so forth - are coming thick and fast. The new AmigaOS is reaching the critical mass of packages necessary for a platform to grow properly thanks to companies such as Hyperion, Haage & Partner, Titan Computer and Grasshopper LLC. Over time this will turn out to be one of Amiga Inc.'s greatest strengths. This issue is also the end of an era, because it's the one where we review AmigaOS4.2, which not only runs the AmigaDE, but also runs natively on PowerPC, waving a final goodbye to the last of the legacy Amigas.



"...and suddenly Amiga is big news once again..."

Future number four

There is another future. The future where the sun always shines and trains are only ten minutes late. This future we call "Monty Haul."

This future started off quietly, rather like the one above. The AmigaOne came out on schedule, but it included an incomplete OS4.0, and the AmigaDE was a little delayed. The delay dragged on to the end of November, and people were starting to mutter. On December 1st, Bill McEwen addressed the Amiga Community from his fireside, apologising for the delay and announcing availability before Christmas. The final hurdles had been overcome, he told us, thanks to a surprise investment which will allow Amiga to accelerate their plans significantly over the next year.

With the future finally looking clear, the AmigaOne and other Zico solutions were a modest but appreciable success. The companies involved were doing well from the systems, and a steady flow of new games and applications started to arrive.

Throughout 2002, AmigaDE attracted an increasing amount of attention. The system appealed strongly to those OCPA members interested in producing home network hardware and higher end platforms, and a steadily increasing number of companies signed on the dotted line. More partnership announcements were made, including a few large software companies who started out on the Amiga and are testing the waters for a return. Then, in late spring, the really big partnership announcement came. Amiga had been chosen for the heart of a new mobile gaming platform from a vast company that is entering the market from left-field, rather the way Sony did with the Playstation. The industry sits up and takes notice, and suddenly Amiga is big news once again.

October 2002, and *Amiga Active* is reviewing this new device. It's the size of a paperback with a 24-bit VGA screen and stereo sound, and by God it's cool. It'll take a little while to find the review in amongst those 174 pages, though. *Amiga Active* has grown at an incredible pace over the last year as everyone wants to find out about the new Amiga and recognises that Amiga Active is the place to go.

The magazine is constantly setting new standards in computer journalism and is the most talked-about publication in the magazine industry. None of us can take any credit for this scheme, however, as we've all taken the money and run. The entire editorial team now owns a small Greek island each and can only be persuaded to write articles for the magazine on those rare rainy days.

We are writing the articles on nice new Amigas, though. A

In a Word

Who says our covers aren't varied? Here's our last twelve in brief.

24: Cryptic
23: Filmic
22: Hard-hitting
21: Shagadelic
20: Definitely not childish!
19: Quick
18: Blue
17: Black
16: Creepy
15: Chilly
14: Arty
13: The dog's...



Cover Lovers

In an online survey, we asked our readers to tell us, among other things, about their favourite *Amiga Active* cover. Here are the top three comments we received...

Alex Paton loves the most recent cover of issue 24 simply because, *"it sums up the next phase of Amiga computing brilliantly."* You mean it's indecipherable, perhaps?

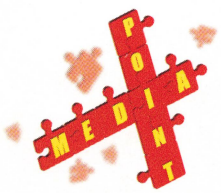
Gareth Kempster was moved by issue 14's painting of a cycloptic policeman, celebrating our review of the first Amiga PCI (geddit?) solution. *"Art. True art,"* he tells us, emotively. *"It's, like, kewl, man."*

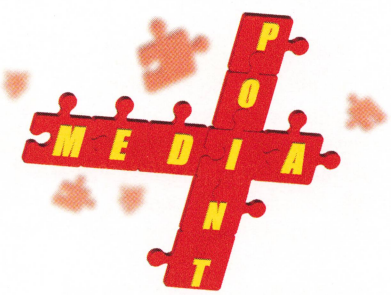
Finally, a man calling himself Johno harks back to the beginning, citing our first issue as his favourite cover and echoing the responses of a number of our ever-faithful readers. *"I was amazed and delighted to see a new Amiga mag at my local shop, so that first issue cover will be the one that I will always remember,"* he writes, before adding, quite unsettlingly, *"Viva da Amiga, Boo!"*. We assume that means it surprised him. We hope you appreciate this month's cover, Johno!

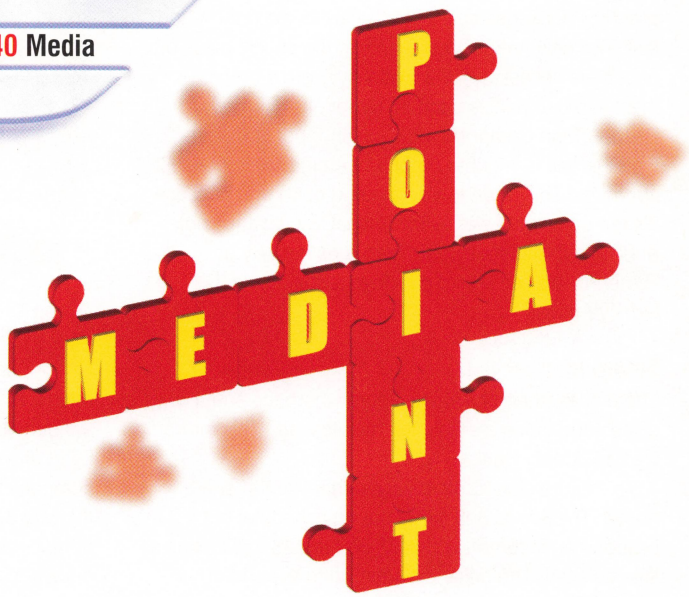
- Name Mediapoint
- Price 80 HFL (around £23)
- Supplier Computer City
- Contact +10 4517722 or visit www.compcity.nl

ACTIVE Reviews

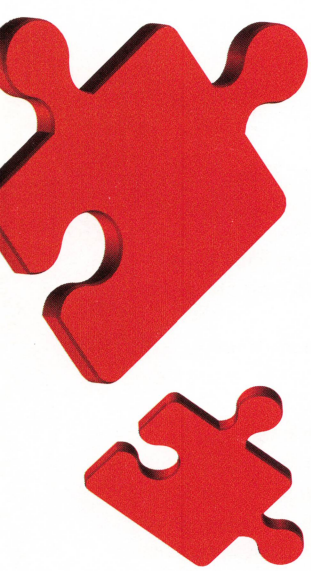
16 Mediapoint 22 MAME 30 Series Zero 38 Shareware 40 Media







Now updated and re-released, can this presentation program live up to the likes of Scala?



Mediapoint is a program for creating and running interactive presentations. It first appeared in 1994 and has now been reissued with a number of improvements over the original. Presentations are, essentially, programs: things happen on the computer in a planned sequence, often with loops, and if the presentation is interactive, there are conditional branches and possibly subroutines. A product such as Mediapoint is made up of a programming language for multimedia displays, a graphical interface to aid in writing the programs, and an interpreter (or player) which runs the programs. The programs that you create may be called "scripts", but there is no real difference between a script and any other program.

Presentation programs in Mediapoint are stored as control scripts which call page scripts. Each displayed page is stored as a separate file, so a page could be re-used in another script if you so desire. The control script decides in what order the pages are to be displayed, which allows for more complicated presentations than are possible in Scala, whose scripts are a simple list of pages.

The language commands are well documented in the manual, and are divided into ScriptTalk and PageTalk, for the two types of file. Normally, all scripts would be edited using the graphical editor, but an experienced programmer would probably find a text editor more convenient.

The Mediapoint language is reminiscent of the old Amiga "Director" multimedia programming language which gives the program a strong basis for further development and updating. There is also an ARexx port accepting a small number of commands - enough to control a presentation from another program such as Bars & Pipes. Or you can run an ARexx or AmigaDOS script at some point in a Mediapoint presentation to control other programs.

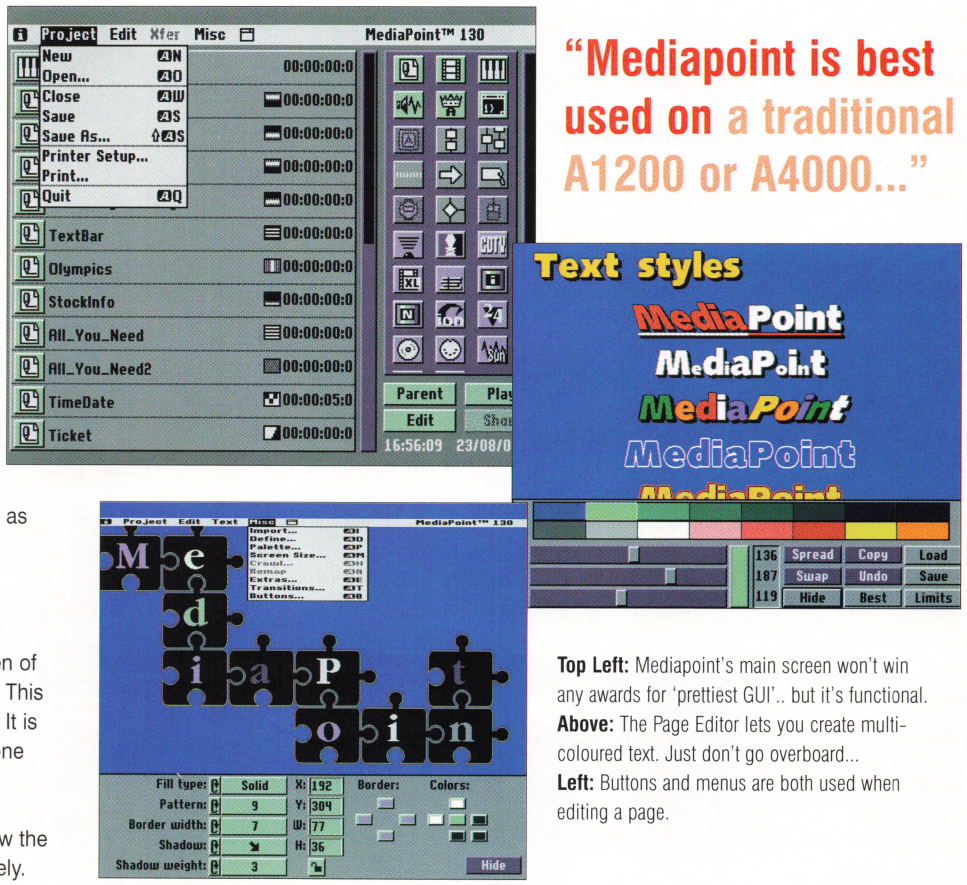
A particularly strong feature of Mediapoint is that it allows parallel events. This is most useful for audio. In Scala, an audio event is linked to a particular page. When you go to the next page, the music stops. If you want a piece of music to play throughout a presentation, you have to send a command to an external program. In Mediapoint, a MOD file can be started at the beginning of the presentation and run right through as a parallel event, or conversely an animation can be started and various 8-bit sound effects played at different times as it runs.

Unfortunately, sound output is limited to traditional Amiga Paula output. There is no AHI driver, and a Toccata driver which was provided did not work as the custom file requester did not list any 16-bit sound sample files. Work is needed here to bring the program up to date. An AHI driver will be essential if the program is to work on the forthcoming AmigaOne, and will a standard ASL file requester rather than a custom one. Sound cards to be

"...allows for more complicated presentations than are possible in Scala..."

used in PCI-based Amigas will allow multi-channel or surround output, which any presentation program should support.

The hardware drivers are known as Xapps, and a developers' kit for these is freely available. This would allow third-party programmers to add support for current hardware. No such support is available for Scala. It would make sense to include this on the standard Mediapoint CD, as there is plenty of space.



Top Left: Mediapoint's main screen won't win any awards for 'prettiest GUI'.. but it's functional.
Above: The Page Editor lets you create multi-coloured text. Just don't go overboard...
Left: Buttons and menus are both used when editing a page.

"Mediapoint is best used on a traditional A1200 or A4000..."

The script editor

When you start up the main Mediapoint program, a screen of stupefying ugliness appears. This is the graphical Script Editor. It is perfectly functional, but anyone familiar with the elegant Scandinavian design style of Scala will be tempted to throw the program in the bin immediately. There is a choice of colour schemes, all equally repellent, but no palette to allow the user to set his own choice of colurs, which would have helped.

Like Scala, Mediapoint works only on AGA screens. The Script Editor can be promoted to a graphics card screen (using ModePro, for example), but doesn't change in size. On a 1024x768 screen, it occupies about 20 percent of the usable space. The page editor also assumes that you will always be using a video format. There is no choice of fonts in the preferences - the editors will use only the supplied Mediapoint bitmap fonts, which are unattractive.

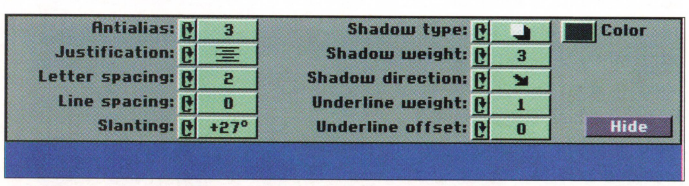
If the program is to have any long term future, it will have to be redesigned so that both editing and presentation can be done on graphics cards as well as video displays, although this may have to wait until AmigaOS 4 is released with its new low-level 2D routines. In the mean time, Mediapoint is best used on a traditional A1200 or A4000, without graphics or sound cards. With careful design, these can still produce a multimedia presentation that is both impressive and robust (has anyone ever attended a Powerpoint presentation that didn't crash?)

The left side of the Script Editor is occupied with a list of events. The order of these can be changed by dragging, as in Scala. An event is created by dragging an icon across from the collection on the right. The main events will be pages containing text, images and buttons. Other types of events include comments in the script (nothing actually happens, of course), labels for looping, animations, and calls to nested scripts.

One useful type of event is a credits scroller, which can import a file from a text editor and allows you to set colours, shadow, scrolling speed and line spacing. It isn't clear whether or not you can set a 2-column cast list - there is a cast option shown, but it had no apparent effect - as this Xapp is not documented.

On each script line there is an icon to show the kind of event, a name or comment, an icon to show the type of wipe or transition to the next event, and a transition time setting. Clicking on any of these allows you to edit them. There are 82 types of transition provided - more than you would ever want, but most of which will only work correctly on a genuine Amiga monitor or TV - if displayed on a computer monitor with a flicker fixer, double images or a plain mess will result.

Unlike Scala, Mediapoint also makes use of menus. While this results in the program being slightly less intuitive to use, it adds a great deal of flexibility. One major menu item is "Scheduling". If this is set to On, editing the timing for an event will also give you access to a scheduling editor. This allows any event to be set to happen only at defined times. For example, a display could be set up so that different information appeared on weekdays and at weekends. The default for scheduling, however, is to allow events only between 1990 and 1998 - you will have to edit the years setting manually, something which should have been accounted for in this new release of the program.



Above: Options for the style and placement of text abound!

The page editor

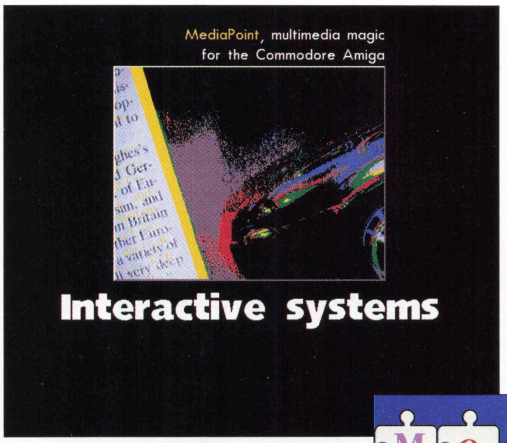
A page is made up of a background still image, in front of whch you can place various windows containing text, images or animations. A window is the equivalent of a box or frame in a DTP program, and is actually an Amiga window. Windows can be resized and repositioned, and can move around while the page is displayed.

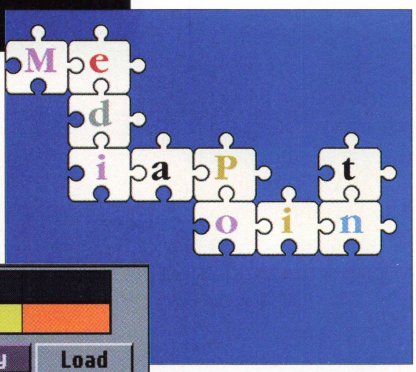
The Mediapoint interface feels more technical, but a little less friendly compared to Scala's. In Mediapoint, you are constantly switching between buttons and menus. Perhaps for a future version, the developers might take a leaf out of TVPaint's book whose series of control panels provide access to very complex settings in an intuitive way - a way which does work, unlike Mediapoint, on a non-AGA screen. The GUI controls in the page editor, like those in Scala, use a second Amiga screen superimposed on the main display. This uses the Amiga's hardware (the copper) and cannot be easily replicated on a graphics card. The various sections of the GUI are shown by hitting keys or by menu selection.

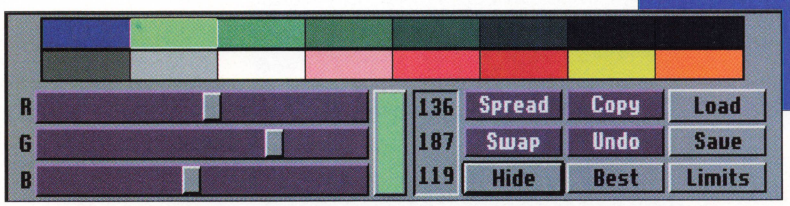
You draw a window, as you might expect, by dragging with the mouse. Then you can import into it a picture or animation, or double-click in it to type some text. A window can contain a background picture with text over it, but not both animation and text (although you could always get around this by preparing an animation including the text before importing it into Mediapoint). An animation can simply be displayed on its own with no windows in front, and if no interaction is needed this may be the best method. In Scala, all text on the same line must be in the same font and colour. Here, Mediapoint is better as it lets you set styles and colours for individual characters.

Extra time

Holding down the Control key brings up some extra controls. The margins of a window can be dragged to position the text, and the order in which windows will appear can be set. Any window can be set to act as a button for interactive displays. This allows all kinds of choices and selections, like the links on a web page. It is also possible to set up a display where the user can type a few words, such as a name or password, but there is nothing as sophisticated as an HTML form. Indeed, a combination of HTML and Flash will provide a setup that is in many ways more advanced than anything Scala or Mediapoint can provide, but the big limitation of an HTML-based approach is that it is extremely difficult to make it user-proof, whereas Mediapoint can be set so that it is almost impossible for the user to crash out of the presentation, which is essential for unattended kiosks, museum displays, or art installations.







Above: What happened to Commodore?
Right: Each piece of this jigsaw moves into place in a different direction.
Below: Spread your colours evenly with Mediapoint's basic but functional pallette editor.

Mediapoint has excellent timing functions. The exact timing of an event can be controlled by the computer's internal clock or by external timing using MIDI Time Code or SMPTE code. This allows you to synchronise several Amigas together, which would be ideal for video walls or art installations. Using SMPTE code requires custom hardware so most users will find MIDI Time Code more convenient.

To the point

The re-release of Mediapoint serves as a reminder of something that is in danger of being forgotten in the rush to PPC processors and PC hardware - just how powerful an Amiga multimedia setup could be. Those who still have a fully working A1200 or A4000 will be able to create some impressive projects with this program, which has perhaps the most comprehensive engine of any Amiga multimedia product.

Mediapoint is obviously based on Scala, but adds some useful features of its own. The editors are clumsy and ugly compared to Scala's streamlined interface, but not so bad as to seriously hamper design work. The scripting language is more flexible and sophisticated than Scala's, which is, ultimately, what matters.

For use with current hardware, the program needs updated drivers, but a great deal can be done with the Amiga's custom hardware - the sound quality from Paula, for example, is perfectly adequate for any kiosk or information system. If any of the more fancy page wipes are to be used, a video format monitor or TV is essential. The manual is better than the Scala one, and is provided in HTML format and (rather tactlessly) as a Word document (perhaps a PDF version would have helped) and good tutorials are included.

It should be possible to update the graphics of the program to make it work on a modern graphics card. Some of the wipes would probably be lost, but the importance of wipes is exaggerated - most are more gimmicky than truly useful. Updating the audio would be relatively easy as it only needs an AHI driver. Output of several channels of sound to various speakers would be useful for exhibitions and installations. Mediapoint would then be fully competitive with Powerpoint or Director on a PC system.

Don Cox

"...synchronise several Amigas together... ideal for video walls or art installations."

Mediapoint

SYSTEM: Any AGA Amiga.

SUMMARY: A powerful multimedia program that still needs some updating.

The most powerful AMIGA® you have ever seen!

- Just in Time compilation makes it possible to emulate a much faster Amiga - up to ten times faster!
- Very high performance: equivalent to a 450MHz 68040! *
- Supports all common graphics, network and sound cards as well as PS/2 and USB keyborads and mice
- Virtual memory for the whole AmigaOS
- Networking support over TCP/IP and direct within your LAN
- Web Browser with SSL, JavaScript, Java, Macromedia Flash-Player, MPEG-Player and RealAudio-Player
- Direct access to Amiga hard drives
- and much more...



"We installed ImageFX on AmigaOS XL during a private meeting in St.Louis and the speed was amazing. It was like having ImageFX completely native on a fast PowerPC machine!!" *Kermit Woodall, Nova Design*

For more information, see Amiga press or visit

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** Figures from SysInfo running on a 1 GHz Athlon.*

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MINI-MASTERCLASS

Mirror, Mirror ...



No time for backups? Can't be bothered with multiple removable disks? Use one of two simple Amiga programs to create a hard drive mirror. It's this easy...







The hard disk drives in our Amigas are mechanical devices. The platter in the drive generates friction and heat as it whirrs around at thousands of revolutions per minute for hours on end, and the heads which read and write data to the disk are controlled by delicate electro-mechanical components which must operate within miniscule physical tolerances in order to properly preserve your valuable data and applications.

This all adds up to one incontrovertible fact: one day, your hard disk will fail, and it will take all of your programs and data with it. On that fateful day, instead of the comfortingly familiar sequence of whirrs and buzzes that emanate from your Amiga as it boots, you will hear a horrid grinding sound, or perhaps a feeble clicking noise, or (most disconcerting of all) nothing but silence. This happened to me when my Amiga's original 120MB hard drive failed many years ago and, trust me, the sound of your hard drive breathing its last will make you feel physically ill!

Alternatively, it will make you feel smug and superior, because you, dear reader, have wisely gotten into the habit of making regular backups of your drive's contents. Haven't you? It makes sense, after all.

Where to back up?

Why, then, do so many of us not bother? For one thing, the hard drive backup process has never been particularly entertaining - it's a chore that many computer users would just as soon avoid. Moreover, as larger and larger hard disks have become ever cheaper, backing them up to removable storage media has become more of a time-consuming hassle than ever. (I actually used to back up my earlier, smaller hard disks to a maddeningly slow, high-density Amiga floppy drive, but only a complete masochist would try to do that with several gigabytes of data!) I then moved on to a Zip drive, which certainly beat the floppy system for speed and convenience, but again, as hard drives continued to increase in size, it became painfully aware that 100MB Zip disks are among the most expensive backup media out there. Today, of course, there is the option of backing up to a rewritable CD drive, but SCSI models of these devices are still quite expensive, not to mention the cost of the Amiga-specific CD-burning software needed to drive them!

There is another way: the decline in price of IDE (and, to a lesser extent, SCSI) hard drives has finally made it sensible to install a second hard drive and maintain a complete mirror of your primary drive on the backup hard disk. Indeed, when you factor in the costs of alternative storage drives (Zip, Jaz, Orb, CD) and their associated removable media, this may be the cheapest route to take - and as an added bonus, hard drives trounce most removable media in the speed department.

Two Amiga programmers have developed software solutions which are ideally suited to maintaining a complete mirror of your boot drive. What makes these programs unique is the way they approach this task.

With conventional Amiga backup software, you first make a complete backup of every file on the drive or partition. Then, in subsequent, "incremental" backups, you only copy files which have been added or modified since the last backup. This can be accomplished by telling your backup software to only copy files in which the "archive bit" has been unset, or by filtering based upon file date criteria. This "incremental" approach saves substantial time over performing a complete backup, but it does have its own shortcomings. For each incremental backup, you must use a new set of removable storage media. Additionally, unwanted files which you purposely delete from your hard drive between backups will be put back when you next resotre your data.

"...one day, your hard disk will fail, and it will take all of your programs and data with it."

The search for a better way began when I first worked with an elegant little program which used to ship with Macintosh Zip drive bundles called Disk Fit Direct. After your first, complete backup, it would scan the contents of the Mac hard drive, compare it to the contents of your multi-Zip-disk backup set, then add and delete files on the Zip disks until the Zips contained an exact "mirror" of the Mac's hard drive. *"There must be something like this for the Amiga,"* I thought.

Lots of searching on Aminet and assorted Amiga newsgroups finally led me to fbackNG by Belgian programmer Chris de Maeyer and BackItAllUp by Colin Wenzel from Australia. fBackNG was originally shareware, but Chris has made it open source, having moved on to Linux programming a couple of years ago (see www.visionary.yucom.be/sindex.htm). BackItAllUp is freeware, and Colin (an active participant in a number of Amiga mailing lists) is still developing the program. It's web site is at www.hotkey.net.au/~colstv/_software.html.

Back it all up - it's easy!

BackItAllUp (BIAU) requires nothing more than OS 3.0. It's of some interest to note how the program actually works. First, it scans your source directory tree and deletes from the destination volume any files which don't exist at the source (so if you've deleted a file from your source drive since your last backup, BIAU will get rid of it for you (it can ask you before it deletes a file if you wish). Next, the program scans your source drive's directory tree again and copies over any files which meet any of the following critera:

- **The source file doesn't exist on the destination.**
- **The source & destination files differ in size.**
- **The datestamps on the two files differ.**
- **Optionally, the program will copy any source file on which the archive bit is cleared.**

You can choose to turn this last feature off because normally, the first three methods should catch any files that need to be copied. Additionally, if your source drive is damaged and thus locked, you can't use the archive bit because it requires writing to the source drive. Finally, enabling setting the archive bit slows the mirroring process down somewhat. One side-effect is that the e-mailer YAM decides to regenerate its folder indexes the next time you start it, which is painfully slow.

BIAU also features menu items allowing you to set the size of the copy buffer in RAM (a larger buffer speeds up the process by allowing larger files to be copied in one pass) and skip over copying a file in the rare instance that another program has a lock on it the instant BIAU tries to copy it. Thus, BIAU will run happily as a background task as you do other things with your Amiga.

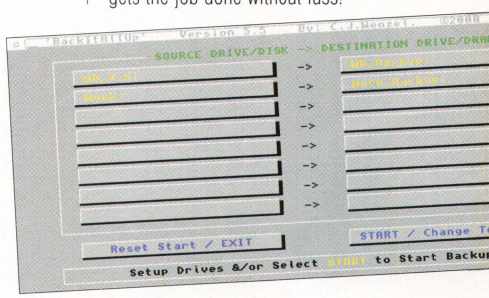
The program is simplicity itself to use (see for yourself: it's on this month's coverdisc). The first time you launch it, hold down the left mouse button for a few seconds after double-clicking the icon and you'll get a screenmode requester. Your choice is saved (as is your entire program configuration) when you quit. The look of the GUI is, um, a little "retro," but it's crystal clear how to use the program without reading any docs (there are none, save some explanatory notes in the About window).

"...will save you hours, if not weeks, of heartache..."

The left column of buttons can be clicked to bring up a file requester to select the source volume or assign which you want to backup (selection of subdirectories isn't supported). The corresponding right-column button specifies the directory or volume into which you want the copying to take place. Should you select a destination volume with no subdirectory specified, the program will warn you that doing so means that any files already in that volume which are not in the source will be deleted, and will offer to create a subdirectory for your backup (if the backup volume you've specified contains no files and is to be used exclusively for mirroring the source, this is not necessary).

The program's GUI will accept up to eight source-destination pairs, so if your source drive has eight or fewer partitions, you're in business: get the program running and watch (or make yourself some tea) as it screams through the mirroring process, volume by volume. When it's done, you can experience the satisfaction of comparing your source and backup volumes and seeing that they are, indeed, exactly the same size!

Below: BackItAllUp's "retro" GUI gets the job done without fuss!



Flexible backups?

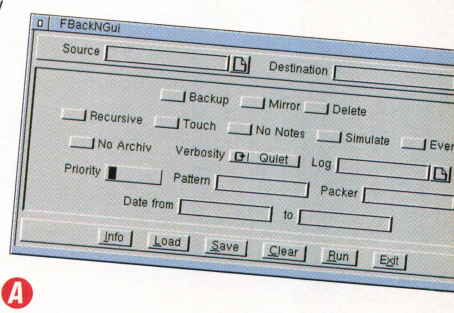
fBackNG achieves exactly the same end results as BackItAllUp, although it offers many more flexible configuration options at the cost of a steeper learning curve. fBackNG can be run from the Shell or a script, but a GUI is provided for those who prefer a graphical frontend. fBackNG offers more options than can be covered here, including filtering by date, backing up single directories, generating log files, only backing up while skipping the mirroring phase, and, most significantly, saving space by compressing backup files with XPK (just make sure you have the XPK library and an XPK extractor on your recovery disk before you use this option!) Reading the AmigaGuide file is essential for fully understanding what this program can do for you.

Both programs will get the job done, and both offer a very fast, "no-brainer" way of keeping an exact mirror of your hard drive's contents, which offers tremendous peace of mind. The only thing neither program does is allow you to mirror your hard drive over multiple removable media disks. Colin Wenzel says he's considered adding this feature, but it would add enormously to the size, complexity and development time of BackItAllUp. With hard drives as cheap as they are these days, backing up to a hard disk is the most sensible option anyway, let's face it.

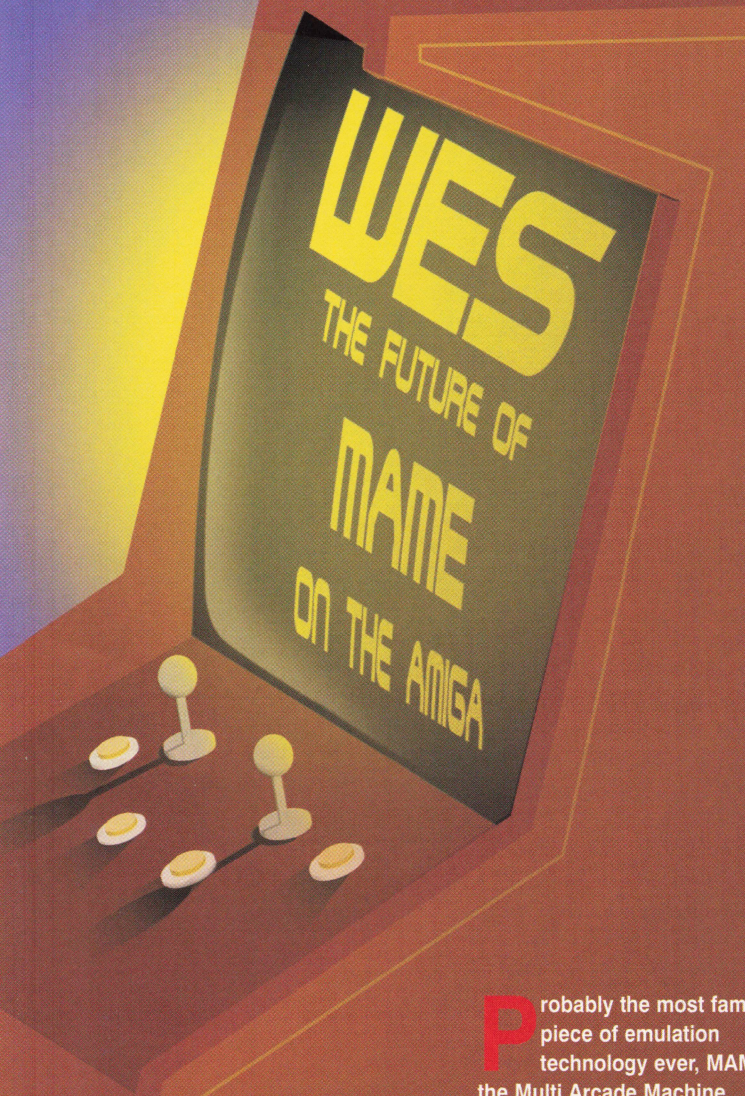
Above all, remember: whether you use one of the two programs covered here, or some other method, backing up your hard drive regularly (which these programs, in their great speed and simplicity, encourage you to do) will save you hours, if not weeks, of heartache when your Amiga's hard drive passes on to the great binary beyond!

Steve Folberg

Below: FBackNG comes with a more modern, if slightly more complex, user interface.



- Name Warp Emulation Suite
- Developer Colin Ward
- From This Month's AACD!
- Contact www.mame.net

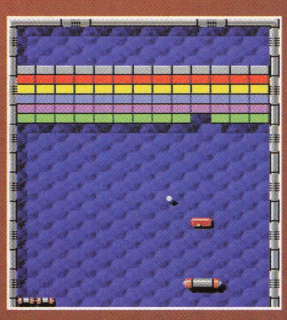




Above: Gemini Wings
Left: Galaga

Probably the most famous piece of emulation technology ever, MAME - the Multi Arcade Machine Emulator - is also a typical piece of PC software. Executable over 10MB in size, memory requirements of at least 48MB - just to play some old games? The result if these requirements are met, however, is a very welcome one for nostalgic Amiga users.

The MAME project is hosted at www.mame.net and is available for all sorts of Operating Systems, including some games consoles. For a long time, though, Amiga users have had to use very old versions of MAME, as work on the emulator has progressed rather rapidly (new versions are released every few months) and Amiga versions have not been able to keep up.



Above: Breakout the bubbly, it's none other than Arkanoid!

"MAME doesn't emulate just one set of hardware..."

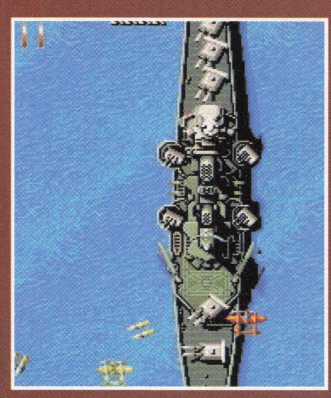
The best shot that Amiga users have had at sampling MAME is WarpMAME by Colin Ward, but for a long time even this port lagged behind the main project enormously, and a lot of people doubted that it would ever catch up. Then, a few weeks ago, Colin reappeared with the news that he had nearly finished porting the most recent version of MAME - 0.37 Beta 16 - to the Amiga. Because MAME requires plenty of raw power from the systems it runs on, Colin never released a 68k version for traditional Amiga hardware. As its name suggests, WarpMAME requires a PowerPC-equipped Amiga running WarpOS.

Take your pick

MAME emulates all sorts of old arcade hardware, which means that you can play all the old classics like 1942, Ghosts 'n Goblins and Galaga. The most recent versions of MAME add the well-liked NeoGeo Console to the list of supported machines. In contrast to many other emulators, MAME doesn't emulate just one set of hardware. There are arcade machines based on Z80 CPUs, 6809, 8080, M-6502, Hu6280 and even some based on 68000-CPUs. Some were even Multi-Processor machines. Video and sound hardware is also different depending on the machine being emulated, and before you start a game in the Multi Arcade Machine Emulator, information about the hardware a game originally ran on is displayed.

The emulator itself consists of a number of source code modules (more are added with each new release) for different sets of hardware. Additionally, you will need a ROM file specific to the Game/Machine that needs to be emulated. With some new releases of MAME, these ROM images also need to be updated.

The bad news is that MAME - due to its PC Legacy - gets slower and slower with each version, probably because the PC coders don't care too much for lower-specced systems. Because of this, Colin Ward now maintains a second version of WarpMAME: WarpMAMEClassic, basically an



Above: 1943. The sequel to, you know...

older version which, despite not being able to run the latest games, runs faster.

One problematic area lies with NeoGeo games, the emulation of which requires an awful lot of memory. Colin has also worked around this, however, producing another two executables: WarpNeoMame and WarpNeoMameClassic. These NeoGeo-only versions of WarpMame, because they are concerned with one set of hardware, benefit from leaving out all the non-NeoGeo related code which reduces the size of the executables considerably.

"To avoid potential confusion, allow us to introduce you to WES..."











Top: We're Knights of the Round Table, we dance whene'er we're able...
Above: Golden Axe
Left: Metalslug

Above: Missile Command
Left: Ghosts and Goblins

Arcade emulation? Suite!

So, instead of just one version of WarpMAME we now have four. To avoid potential confusion, allow us to introduce you to WES, the Warp Emulation Suite, Colin's latest emulator. WES is basically a framework for all four aforementioned emulators, each of which exists as a separate "Engine" - a special executable which can be launched by WES. The big advantage of WES is that if Colin implements a particular feature for WES - such as Picture-In-Picture display functionality or AHI support for sound - then all of the included emulators will automatically support it. This simplifies development and ensures that all of the included emulators will automatically support all the latest features.

A future version of WES will also include WarpSNES, also in two versions - the current final version (with fast sound) and the most recent beta version which lost 50 percent of its speed due to, you guessed it, those pesky PC coders not really caring about system requirements.

In order to make it more Amiga friendly, WES will benefit from a pair of GUIs, including Nostalgia, an existing Amiga GUI for all sorts of emulators which already supports WarpNeoMame but will be expanded to support more of Colin Ward's creations. Nostalgia will remain an independent GUI, whilst Colin will be developing his own. Until these GUIs are available, however, WES and WarpMAME need to be run from the Amiga's shell.

We've included a beta of WES on this month's coverdisc. To run it (after installing it from our CD and obtaining some ROMs for the games you want to play), you would launch it with the command:

```
WarpKickstart 1943
-mame -frameskip 0¶
```

This would run the game 1943 using the "mame" engine (the latest version of WarpMAME). If you wanted the older, faster WarpMAME, you would specify `-mameclassic` here instead.

WarpKickstart is basically a 68k program which serves to minimalize the number of context switches required between the PowerPC and 68k processors and do things like c2p (chunky-to-planar graphics conversion) in 68k code, while the PowerPC runs the main emulation core. c2p can, however, also be run on the PowerPC side, so you can test which is faster on your system. As WES is still a beta, not all display options are implemented yet. The table below shows which display modes are currently supported.

These latest developments on MAME for the Amiga are an encouraging sign. Colin has promised that more frequent updates will be forthcoming from now on, and with the beta version on our CD, perhaps it's time you gave it a look. If you'd like to find out more about MAME before delving into the murky world of Arcade emulation yourself, take a look at Fabio Rotondo's MAME Visual Guide on Aminet (in the misc/emu directory). With screenshots of all original MAME games, it's quite a download - although it has been split into sixteen parts! We couldn't fit it onto this month's CD, but we hope to include at least some of it on our next coverdisc. A

	68k CGX/P69	PPC CGX/P69	68k AGA	PPC AGA
16 bit	✓	✓	✗	✗
8 bit	✓	✓	✓	✗
16 bit dirty	✗	✗	✗	✗
8 bit dirty	✗	✓	✗	✗

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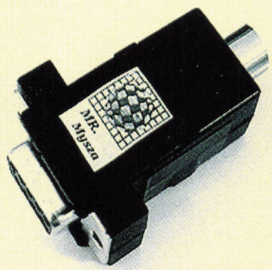

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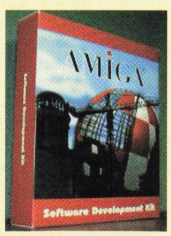

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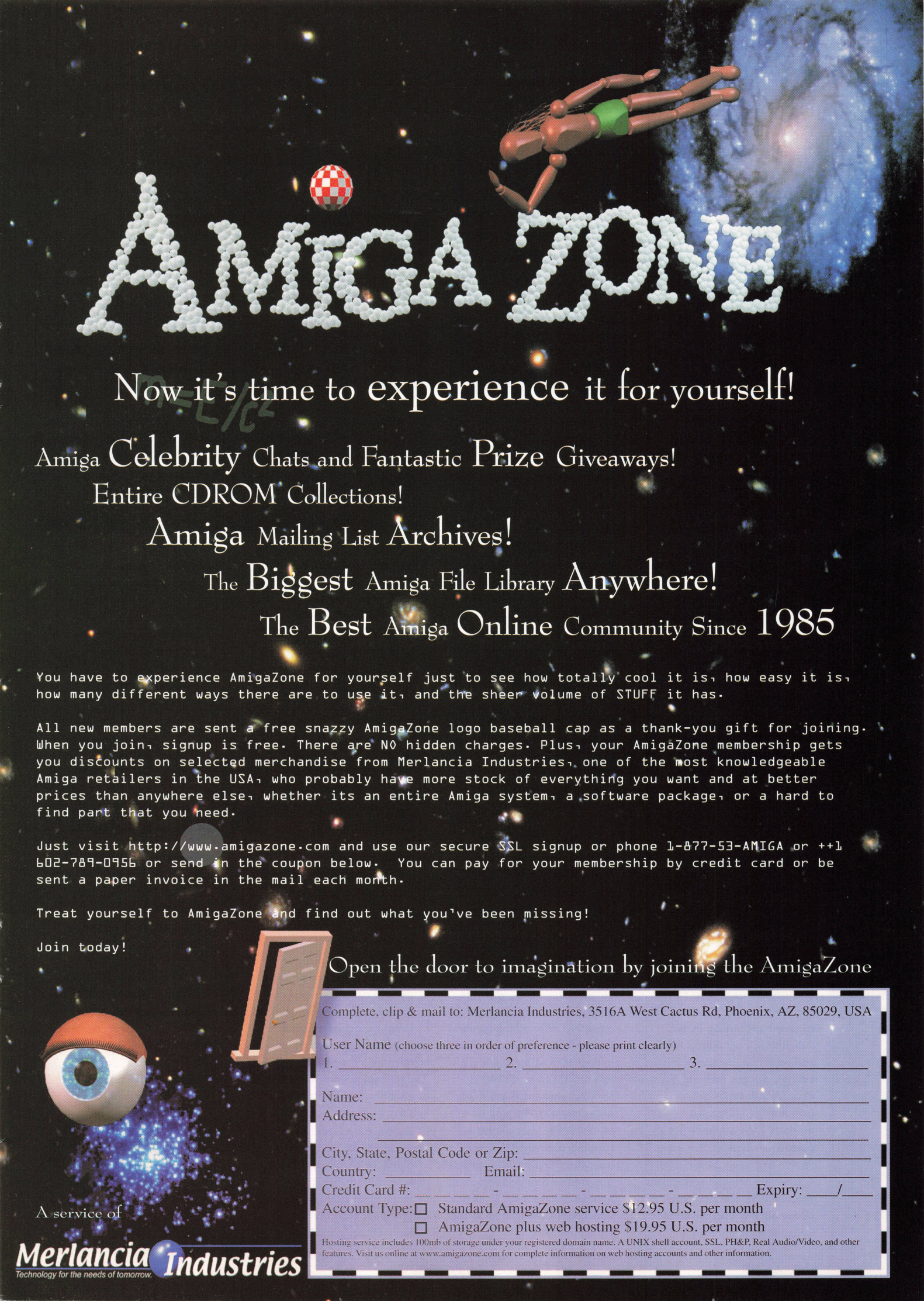

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Nextgen news

Tao Much Money

Tao Group have announced that it has received an equity investment of around $18m (approximately £13m) from a team of investors led by Silicon Valley firm Bowman Capital Partners.

"Bowman has invested into Tao because of the combination of its impressive management team," stated Hazel Cameron, General Partner at Bowman, in an official statement. *"As the demand for premium services increases rapidly, so does the necessity for having a high performance multimedia engine. We believe that Tao is well positioned to become a global leader in the client device market."*

NEC, Sharp and Sony, who also participated in this round of financing, are becoming increasingly dependant on the provision of a high-performance Java and multimedia solution for handheld electronics products - a solution which Tao provides in the form of their intent Java Technology Edition which also forms the basis of Amiga's forthcoming Digital Environment.

"It is a testament to the strength of Tao's team and technology that at a time when the capital markets are so depressed, we can attract investment from blue chip finance and industry partners," commented Tao's Chairman, Francis Charig.

Bowman's Hazel Cameron joins, among others, Motorola's Ray Burgess on Tao's board of directors.

Enterprising Pocket PC

Microsoft's new Operating System for handheld devices, codenamed Merlin, is scheduled for release on October 4. Compaq, Hewlett Packard, Casio, Toshiba and Symbol are among the companies expected to use the new Pocket PC 2002 OS in their upcoming PDAs.

With support added for Virtual Private Networks (VPNs), devices running the new OS will be targeted primarily at enterprise markets with a higher price point than typical consumer PDAs - between $400-$600.

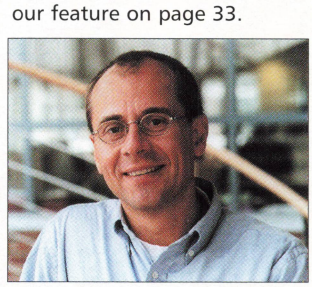
Microsoft clearly recognises that, as with the desktop, dominance of the business sector will be crucial to establishing a foothold in the PDA sector. Pocket PC 2002 will also include instant messaging functionality and a new version of the Windows Media Player. Emphasis has been placed on the system's increased connectivity to wireless networks, with the ability to manage servers remotely from a PDA running the new OS.

Pocket PC 2002 will only run on ARM4-based PDAs. Hewlett Packard has already announced that it will be releasing two handhelds running the new Microsoft operating system, the Jordana 565 and 568 priced at $599 and $649 respectively, and which will be targeted at the enterprise sector.

Tao and Terraplay Enter Partnership

Tao Group have announced a strategic partnership with the Ericsson-backed Swedish networking technology company Terraplay Systems, who offer a complete networking solution that dynamically reduces bandwidth requirements for demanding networked applications such as on-line gaming.

Terraplay's specialisation is enabling fluid networking across variable client and bandwidth conditions. The Terraplay product is multi-platform enabled, currently available for Windows, Playstation 2, PocketPC and Symbian. The meshing of Tao's binary portable technology with Terraplay's network technology will offer fast time to market and efficient network infrastructure for cross platform networked applications. *Amiga Active* wants to know who snuck into our offices and read the ECTS report printed elsewhere in this issue. For more information on Terraplay, see our feature on page 33.



Above: Bengt Lilliequist, Terraplay CEO.



Embedded XP

Microsoft are also expected to release their Windows XP Embedded operating system later this year, and are already offering a second beta of this particular OS on its web site in an effort to win over the embedded development community.

XP Embedded is intended for set-top boxes, games consoles and other such devices at the larger end of the consumer electronics market. Microsoft are yet to establish themselves in the embedded OS market, where companies such as Wind River and Palm have a firm foothold.

Nearly 3G...

Japanese telecommunications giant NTT DoCoMo has revealed that it will be setting third generation mobile technology loose in Tokyo on October 1 this year.

The 3G wireless service, called FOMA, will support normal packet communication at 384Kbits/s (downlink) and an uplink and video telephony at 64Kb/s.

One much-anticipated 3G service, video streaming, will not be released until next Spring due to longer than acceptable connection times reported by the system's beta testers. DoCoMo are also expecting a high proportion of take-up for the new network by business users, citing an estimated 150,000 subscribers within the first six months. The 3G service is expected to become available across Japan by the end of 2002 and six million subscribers are expected by March 2005.



Above: 3G will become a reality for the citizens of Tokyo on October 1, but video streaming will have to wait until next year.

Hair Yesterday

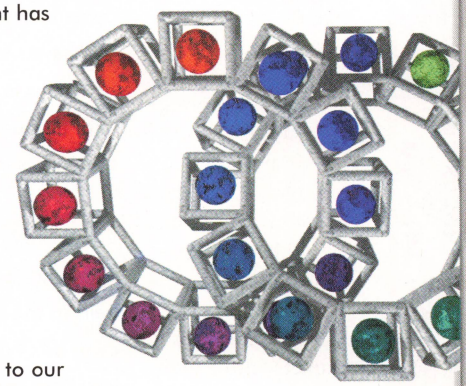
Chris Hinsley was successfully developing games in the 1980's, and he'd got a working solution for his new technology before the end of that decade. By 1992 we had set up Tao. A further nine years later, the Open Contents Platform Association was launched by blue chip consumer electronics corporations in Japan, and we had products being developed and brought to market, from digital cameras to mobile phones to digital television.

During that period we'd seen the crazy valuations on stock markets around the world, most notably NASDAQ, for companies that should have been seen to be valueless, and there's been the subsequent and natural compensation resulting from the market's earlier over-expectations. Now there's been an almighty collapse and the availability of investment capital to growing, small technology companies has dried up.

"...it's a very tough time, even for well-managed, exciting technology companies."

So it's a very tough time, even for well-managed, exciting technology companies. Deserving cases are often going to the wall. Years of work for some people are now ending in tears. The misrepresentations by chancers who walked away with millions of dollars, who set up their Internet companies without any substance, are coming back to hurt hard working, genuinely able entrepreneurs and engineers.

Those that can raise money in this climate have to have strong management, great technologies and some luck. Fortunately, Tao's had some luck - albeit, I hope, fully deserved. We've just completed raising $18 million and brought in some major industrial investors including further financing from Sony in addition to new partners, Sharp and NEC. Leading the investment has been a great, blue chip American venture fund, Bowman Capital Partners.



The financing will enable us to grow the team and take our product more aggressively to a global market. It's a long way away from 1992 when we used to meet above a hairdresser west of London.

Content has to be central to our platform. We still have plenty to do. And in order to achieve this we are bringing in an outstanding business team. Complacency is not setting in at Tao.

Francis Charig,
Chairman of Tao Group.



ECTS 2001

A Docklands Odyssey

This year's ECTS was something of a European Consumer Electronics No Show - nobody turned up.

The show that is supposedly Europe's answer to E3 is not in the best of health. Not only was there still no presence from Amiga this year, there was no presence from Sony or Nintendo either. Of course, the giants weren't strictly speaking sitting it out, instead they held their own events over the ECTS weekend. Sony held their normal party but didn't have a whole lot to say, while Nintendo shipped journalists into their own venue to give them a nice, safe, controlled demo of the forthcoming Gamecube. Sony and Nintendo were by no means the only companies to stay away.

This seems to be a growing trend - if you're big enough to afford a huge stand at ECTS, people will come to wherever you are anyway, so you might as well save money doing it yourself and have more control over the situation. Relocating ECTS to a venue with no pubs for miles around may have added to the games industry's decision to stay away in droves.

ExCeLlent?

This year's ECTS was held in the new ExCeL exhibition halls in the Docklands, a few depressing miles from central London in the middle of an infinitely large and infinitely boring building site with nothing to recommend it apart from a quick view of the Millenium Dome standing idle while people figure out what to do with it. The new hall is huge and lifeless, reminiscent of some ultra-modern airport in an oil-rich country that can afford stainless steel and glass even if nobody goes to their country. The show was equally lifeless - the old exhibition hall at Olympia was a far more interesting place to visit, with balconies to wander and huge banners draped across the walls.

Were the stands particularly interesting, they might have gotten away with the drab venue, but by and large they weren't. With the bulk of the big entertainment software publishers choosing to stay away, the exhibition was filled with second-string publishers and business-to-business operations. Distributors showed off rank after rank of shelving covered with budget titles, information disks and cheap DVDs, no doubt of great interest to retail buyers. While there were a few sound and graphics card manufacturers showing off their wares, the most visible hardware companies were the controller manufacturers, demonstrating the latest fashions in mice, joysticks, and replica .50 calibre heavy assault lightguns for video gamers.

It would be unfair to say that this year's ECTS was a total failure - but it seems to have evolved from a trade fair into a business fair. There has been some talk of opening up ECTS to the public next year, providing something rather like the long-mourned PCW shows of the '80s, to get the big names (and big stands) back.

"...a few depressing miles from central London in the middle of an infinitely large and infinitely boring building site..."

The Boothbabe Count

It has often been suggested that the surest guide to the health of the computer entertainment industry is the "boothbabe count" - the number of models hired to wander around stands in silly costumes smiling at people. From this year's statistics you might assume that the market was on life support - one wag even went as far as to say that this year's ECTS was like an Amiga show. This time, however, the Lara Croft shorts were swapped for business suits, and everyone was talking mobile gaming infrastructure.

There were numerous companies showing off mobile gaming content,. Korea's Com2us Corporation had an almost endless supply of WAP and Java games, all of which (apart from the board games and card games) won't have a chance in hell of selling to western markets - i-Mode anime love-story RPGs anyone? UK-based Purple Software, meanwhile, are producing multi-platform board games and card games for Epoc, PalmOS, PocketPC, Windows, WAP/HTML and OpenTV. If that's not a good argument for the OCPA, I don't know what is.

The way the exhibitors seemed to regard the future of mobile gaming was neatly summed up in Funcom, a company with a background in the games industry making the push into the mobile sector. Their stand was busy promoting their massively multiplayer on-line PC games - primarily Anarchy Online, which is just about to launch - while also trailing their upcoming title Midgard. They were also promoting - more quietly - the fact that they are big in mobile gaming. Funcom's high end stuff like Anarchy Online is cutting edge gaming material - vast, persistent 3D worlds with gorgeous environments played by thousands of players simultaneously. Their mobile offerings include a quiz engine for mobile phones, SMS services, a java applet to transfer pictures to your mobile, and a bunch of web-based board games and card games (are you noticing a theme here?) Whilst there's certainly demand for card games and board games, these things do not a revolution make.

"Whilst there's certainly demand for card games and board games, these things do not a revolution make."



Right: Huge crowds enthusiastically flocking to... somewhere else?

Below: Docklands exhibition hall, not Midwest empty mall.



Fast Food Software

If the content has a little way to go, at least the backend of the new era seems to be getting into place. One of the most notable announcements made at the show concerned Btopenworld's Software To Go. This on-line service will offer games content for download using an on-demand rental model. Targeting broadband customers, the web site *(www.btopenworld.com/stg)* will be trialing a service with content from publishers including MGI software, Ubi Soft, Infogrames and Guildhall Leisure.

Sweden's Terraplay Systems AB were doing a good job of wowing the execs with their games oriented network server platform. This is a game-independent server system which provides multi-platform intercommunication - what had the execs impressed was Terraplay's ability to interchange game data between fundamentally different platforms, so that one person could play a game on a PDA against an opponent playing the same game on a Playstation2. It's just the game data and comms interfaces that are shared: the applications still need to exist natively. Tao Group, are you listening? *(looks like it! -Ed.)*

Terraplay's system is oriented to online gaming, offering Adaptive Rate Control (ARC), peer-to-peer and client server synchronisation and Quality Of Service (QOS) guarantees.

Mobile Maybe

The one clear message of this year's ECTS show is that the computer entertainment industry is currently in a state of flux. People are expecting the market to change, and are talking mobile gaming up as the next big money spinner. There's a lesson to be learned from the fact that the most interesting developments at the show were in networking technology. The multi platform issue is a huge one begging for an acceptable solution, but the biggest stumbling block to overcome on the journey from the gleam in the money men's eyes to cash in the money men's pockets is finding persuasive content. The vast majority of mobile content on display was simply very dull - and that, for sure, is why the show was too.

Andrew Korn



Series Zero

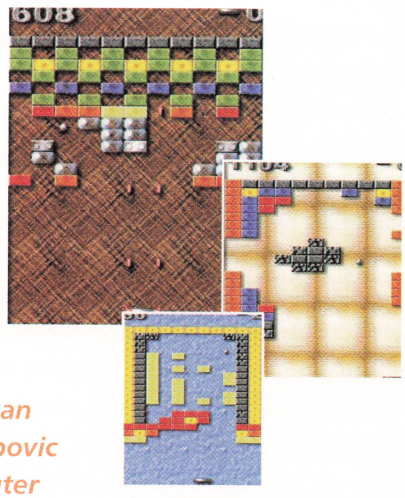
Amiga's first batch of content for the Sharp Zaurus is just about ready to rock 'n' roll.

The thing that really lights Sharp's fire when it comes to Amiga is that they've seen that Amiga is a way to a potentially huge amount of content, and content is what they know they need if they want their Zaurus to be a big success.

Amiga are providing Sharp with software to run on their Zaurus, although they aren't writing it all themselves. Instead they've teamed up with a number of developers working on the AmigaDE to develop software under their label. The first software release will be Amiga's "Series Zero" games, a taster of what they hope to be able to provide in the future.

Series Zero is targeted very much at the Japanese market - Amiga asked developers to provide puzzle-based games. We are told that there will be a wider variety of titles in future series, so arcade game fans will have something to play with later, but for now it's small, simple puzzle games, mostly involving marbles. They are also all "pick up and play" games - the kind of games that people might have on their PDA and pull out for a quick game while on a crowded Tokyo train, for example.

Although we don't have final specification for the games or details of their price and distribution, we can give you a preview of what they are like.



Batty

Developed by Ivan and Milan Golubovic for Titan Computer

Batty is a rather sexy looking clone of that old favourite, Arkanoid. For those of you who spent the 80's in hibernation, this was basically Breakout with power-ups. If you spent the 70's in hibernation as well, this means that the top of the screen is filled with coloured bricks, which you have to destroy by hitting them with a ball, using a bat that moves horizontally across the bottom of the screen.

Batty has all the things you'd expect from an Arkanoid style game - ghost bricks which the ball passes straight through, invulnerable bricks, metal bricks that take several hits, exploding bricks that take out their neighbours and so on. The standard power-ups such as sticky bat, faster/slower ball, laser ball, larger/smaller bat are all there too.

The graphics look great, with pretty textures and drop shadows on the bricks, nice backdrops and clear power-up icons. Sound is non-existent on the copy we have, but we don't know if this will be the case for the final version. The levels are nicely arranged, requiring some tactical thinking to get rid of the bricks as effectively as possible. However, Batty does not particularly stand out as far as Arkanoid clones go.

The first problem with Batty is simply one of size. A small screen can make it tricky to judge your bat position accurately - this in itself is an innate problem of the screen format and not something the developers can be blamed for, but it is exacerbated by other issues. The power-ups have a tendency to drift down at quite obtuse angles, which does make them relatively easy to pick up, adding to the general fun, but it also means you sometimes cannot avoid collecting them, which can be seen as a natural hazard when

it comes to having your bat shrunk or the ball speeded up, but isn't very fair in the case of the instant death power-up. All in all there's just a little too much luck involved, which makes the fact that there is no way to continue from the level you died on rather annoying. Given that the idea of these games is that they should be ideal pick-up-and-play titles, being able to start on different levels would add a lot to the lastable appeal of a game like this. As it stands, you'll end up playing the first few levels a lot and rarely seeing the later levels, which makes the game somewhat monotonous after a while.



Boxikon

Developed by Paul Burkey for e.p.i.c Interactive

This variant on the Tetris theme comes from Paul Burkey, author of the successful Amiga God game Foundation. The idea of the game is quite simple - you pick up shapes from the choices that appear in a row of five boxes at the bottom of the screen, rotate them if you so wish, and place them in the grid that takes up the rest of the screen. Every time you fill a horizontal or vertical line of squares, the blocks in those squares vanish.

As time goes on you'll get the occasional shape with a block in it which will explode when it vanishes, eliminating surrounding blocks. If you take too long to think about the next placement, immovable blocks will be randomly placed in a spare space on the grid which can only be removed by blowing them up.

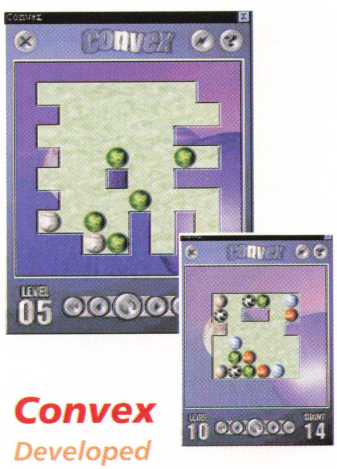
Boxikon doesn't require the quick thinking and reactions of Tetris, although the immovable blocks do give it a race against the clock element. It follows the same basic Tetris concept of shape sorting, challenging you to produce the ideal sorting structure to keep game going as long as you can before you are no longer able to add new shapes.

As the game progresses the more useful and easy to place shapes appear in your selection less frequently, and more complex, hard to place block appear more often. Allowing you to eliminate blocks in two dimensions adds an extra tactical element, as unlike Tetris it is not always sensible to remove a line as soon as you can - if you execute it properly, placing a new shape can take out columns in both directions, clearing more space.

"...unlike Tetris it is not always sensible to remove a line as soon as you can..."

Boxikon is very simple to get the hang of and nicely addictive. It's a less open-ended game than Tetris, the aim being to last as long as you can and eliminate as many blocks as you can before the square fills up.

As far as being pick-up-and-play goes, this makes it pretty much ideal. Perfect for ten minutes or so of brain-bending on a train or whatever, and probably my favourite game of the series.



Convex

Developed by ZeoNeo

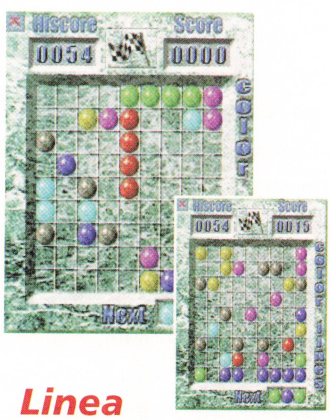
Convex is an intriguing little title. This is a pure puzzler, with no reaction-based element to the game at all. Each screen is an assortment of coloured marbles stacked gravitically - which is to say that if you push a marble off a ledge, it will fall down and land either on a marble below it or the ground. The point of the game is to clear the marbles from the level, which is done by bringing marbles of the same colour together. If there were an even number of each marble this would be a simple task, but there are often odd numbers, which means bringing three together at a time, which can only be done by having the marbles stacked. This means the order you eliminate the marbles in is critical, and if you ever find yourself with a single marble of any colour you're stuck and have to restart the game.

Convex is excellently thought out in terms of the way you play the game. Controls are simple - you just move the curser over a marble and drag it left or right. You can select any level to play on, so if you get stuck on a level you can jump forwards and come back to it later. This is probably the prettiest of the games here, with nicely rendered textures on the balls and prettily coloured backdrops throughout. Even the button gadgets look nice in a shiny chrome effect.

My only complaint about Convex is that it really doesn't last very long. I completed the 20 levels that came with the game in about half an hour,



and once you've done them once there's not much point playing them again. The problem is that each level has to be solvable, and there's no guarantee that any random level would be. According to the end of game text there will be other levels available to download, but we don't yet know what will be supplied with the final version. The author apparently specialises in genetic algorithms, so perhaps he could figure out some way of auto-generating levels?



Linea

Developed by Ivan and Milan Golubovic for Titan Computer

Linea is somewhere between Convex and Boxikon - you have a grid of squares, but this time you fill it with marbles. You can move marbles around the screen by selecting them and then selecting the square you wish to move them to, but they can only go there if there is a clear path to the square you select. Each time you move a marble, three more appear on the screen at random positions. To eliminate marbles from the screen you have to create vertical, horizontal or diagonal rows of any given colour. This gets progressively harder as the screen fills up with marbles, as this limits your ability to move marbles around.

The main problem I have with Linea is that I find it a little boring. I suspect something like Boxikon works well because it is a spatial awareness challenge - it is an ongoing and ever-changing set of sorting problems, which appears to appeal to some fairly low-level part of the human mind in a similar way to jerk-response games.

Linea instead relies on the simple tactical procedure of moving the furthest or most likely to be blocked marbles first, with a risk / reward decision to be made where you have the option of leaving the middle of a line unfilled longer while you attempt to lengthen the ends so as to remove the maximum number of marbles in one go. As with the other Series Zero games, production values are high, but in this game, sustained interest isn't.

"...production values are high, but in this game, sustained interest isn't."



Solitaire

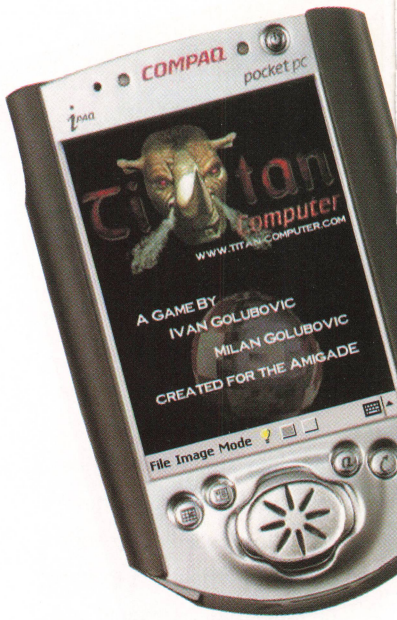
Developed by John Harris

Solitaire is one of those applications that every self-respecting platform should have. It may not be the most glamorous game in the world, but it's the most played - Microsoft Solitaire ranks with Word, Outlook and IE as the most used computer software.

John Harris' version for AmigaDE is an excellent example. It contains 10 varieties of the genre, possibly overkill, but better to have more than less. It does have the standard (Klondike) solitaire and Freecell, the only solitaire variant I am aware of which isn't luck-based (in that any game is possible to complete), so all the important bases are covered.

There's not a lot that you can do wrong with a version of solitaire, but there is plenty that can be done right, and in this case most of it is here. You have the option of unlimited undos if you make a mistake (or want to cheat), the cards shuffle themselves pleasingly, there's auto-completion and there are built-in rules.

The only things missing are a warning for when you get in to an impossible situation, which is something of an imperfect science anyway, and a restart option to allow you to have a go at the same arrangement of cards again, although you can always hit undo repeatedly if you must start a game again from the very beginning.



Series overview

The Series Zero games exhibit a high level of professional polish, which puts them above most similar offerings, but they aren't exactly earth-shattering. To a large extent they're the kind of things you'd expect out of the best of the shareware scene - solid, well produced but basically simple games.

That's fine - every platform needs games like this, and the better the basics are the more sellable the whole platform becomes. However, this is not a collection that will get the pulse racing - and what really makes a platform sellable is a killer app. or two.

This is a strong collection of basic puzzlers, but the only thing remarkable about it is that it's the first batch of content from Amiga.



TERRAPLAY™

Swedish company Terraplay System's IP offers a complete solution to those networking blues.

You've got a rocket launcher and you've captured the flag. The only thing between you and your home base is a single member of the enemy team sniping from behind a staircase - but he hasn't seen you yet, he's in rocket range and you've got a suitable battle-cry tied to one of your function keys. You place him perfectly in your cross hairs, step out, hit that function key and... the game freezes. A moment or two later when your network catches up, you're lying dead on the floor and your foe is laughing at your poor connection. It's all part of the on-line gaming experience, whether you like it or not.

Zoom ahead a few of years. According to the pundits, we're now in a world with perhaps ten times the number of people playing on-line games. Already on-line gaming, a minority pursuit, is a major gobbler of bandwidth. How are the networks going to cope with such growth? To make things worse, this is also a world with a far wider range of platforms the service providers are going to have to support. Currently most on-line gaming is PC based, but within a few years a huge chunk of that market share will have gone over to consoles, digital TV, and mobile platforms. If the diversity of products wasn't enough of a problem, consider the issue of variable bandwidth - in many on-line games, a fast connection is critical. If wireless gamers find themselves losing games every time the train they are on moves into a low signal strength area, you can bet the experience isn't going to be a whole lot of fun.

"...you're lying dead on the floor and your foe is laughing at your poor connection."

The Terraplay solution

Many people think that on-line gaming is the next SMS - a trend that will grow exponentially over the next few years, turning into a multi-billion dollar industry. The expense of providing network infrastructure to support this boom is going to be the single major determining factor in how this industry develops. Getting the optimum return for investment in network infrastructure will be the key for network providers to succeed, and there are many factors that will determine the success of any individual strategy.

Consider the example of a company dedicated to providing network gaming on a particular platform. The single platform approach provides huge advantages in terms of simplicity of implementation and support, and therefore has the potential to offer a high return for investment as a niche business. However, it is entirely dependent on the platform becoming successful enough to support the company, and for the platform to retain market position for long enough to support the platform dependent aspects of the provider's infrastructure investment.

Terraplay offer a product suite aimed at reducing the cost of all aspects of delivering on-line gaming content, from the provision of a common Application Programmer's Interface (API) to make game development easier, through network infrastructure components designed to alleviate variable and limited bandwidth options, to the core back-office functionality required by the service providers, such as billing and account management.

"Terraplay Systems AB sprang from the research labs of mobile phone giant Ericsson."



Right: Bengt Lilliequist, Terraplay CEO

The Company

Terraplay Systems AB sprang from the research labs of mobile phone giant Ericsson. The core IP for the Terraplay system was developed in Ericsson's compression technology lab by Magnus Jändel, now the company's Chief Technology Officer. Shortly after the prototype was developed and demonstrated, Ericsson and IT-Provider formed Terraplay Systems as a joint investment. The development team was moved over from Ericsson and the company was launched in February 2000.

Terraplay's staff and management mostly come from Ericsson, helping to keep a strong bond between the two companies. The Chief Executive Officer is Bengt Lilliequist, who has been a regional business director for Ericsson Business Networks and marketing manager at Ericsson Inc. Business Systems, US. Sales Director Jan Grankvist, product marketing director Jeremy Hamill-Keays, and CTO Magnus Jändel also arrived as part of the Ericsson legacy.

The concept

Whether peer-to-peer or client/server, the basic model for any network is that of a multiple clients talking to a centralised or distributed system for processing incoming packets from the clients and distributing packets back to those clients informing them of changes to the game world. These two halves of the equation have their own associated problems.

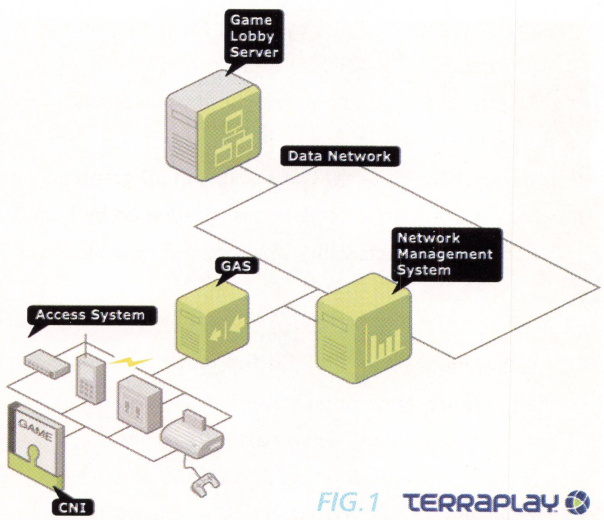


FIG. 1 TERRAPLAY

On the client side, the issue is one of application networking code. Each on-line game will have code that deals with communicating across any networks the game is developed to utilise. This code is normally independently developed for each platform, to communicate the appropriate data for the target server. What Terraplay do to change this is to offer a common API, termed the Common Network Interface (CNI). This is a C++ library that runs on multiple platforms (Windows, Playstation 2, PocketPC, Symbian/EPOC, Java, Java2ME and shortly intent). The library is relatively small - even the Windows version is only 230KB. The interface is high-level, saving development time and making it much easier for developers to provide multi-platform support through the same networks (figure 1, above).

The server system is where the real money goes - the computing power for the client is the customer's own, while the service provider has to pay for the server hardware and bandwidth. The server is also the critical application, as the quality of service provided by the game servers will play a critical part in customer satisfaction. Terraplay's solution on the server side is to provide a highly scalable system which intelligently optimises network performance. It will keep track of the available bandwidth and do its best to guarantee critical data under adverse network conditions.

The best way of explaining how this would work is through the example at the start of the article. If the game in question was running the Terraplay system, the reduced bandwidth would be noted by the server, and it would modify the data it sends accordingly. The server will therefore prioritise the data dealing with a player's target, and hopefully he'll still be able to get a clean shot. The position of the other players in the game might not get updated for a second or two, but that shouldn't matter, as they will be out of sight anyway. You can think of this as being somewhat like hidden surface culling in 3D graphics, where the process of rendering is speeded up by ignoring any objects which are obscured from view.

The technology

The two principle elements of Terraplay's technology are the Game Application Server (GAS), which manages and delivers game data optimally to network clients (the individual gamers in an on-line game), and the Common Network Interface (CNI), which is the API to allow applications to communicate with the GAS. While the GAS is normally physical server hosted by the ISP or games service provider, there is also a client hosted version called GAS-TANC (Game Application Server - Terraplay Application Network Concept - a contrived acronym if ever we saw one!) which can run on one of the client machines, allowing peer-to-peer networking (figure 2). The two other elements deal with managing these networking elements - the Terraplay Management System (TMS) handles billing, subscriber authentication and maintenance, and the Lobby Server Interface (LSI) manages the system resources.

The various elements of the network can exist in the same space or can be linked across a network. This means that the provision of service does not have to be a one-company thing. For example, it is possible to cluster GAS systems across the network. With the separate GAS systems exchanging game data, players connected to local servers on different ISPs could participate in the same game (figure 3).

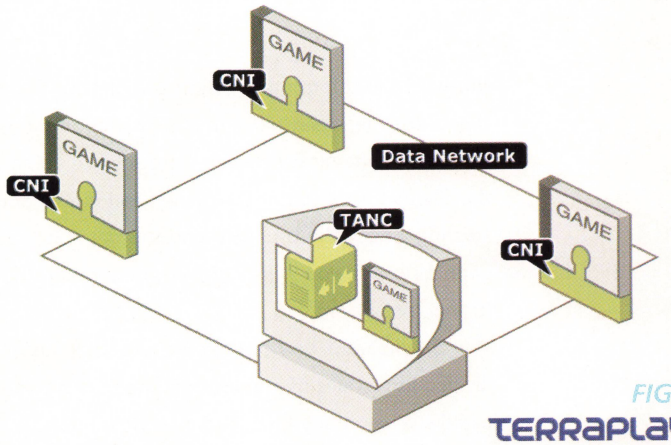


FIG.2 TERRAPLAY

The GAS runs on the Solaris 8 platform. An individual GAS is capable, according to Terraplay, of serving between 350 and 1500 simultaneous users, although it should be noted that the GAS supports multiple simultaneous applications, and also supports clustering, so the system is capable of scaling to applications with any usage requirements.

Optimised gaming

The principle advantage to the player comes through the Dynamic Subscription Model (DSM) and Adaptive Rate Control (ARC). In figure 4, below, you can see how this will work in game terms. In the case of a racing game, the important information is what the drivers closest to you are doing.

When you steer your car, the information about the change in position of your car is sent to the server to be broadcast out to the other players in the game.

"The various elements of the network can exist in the same space or can be linked..."

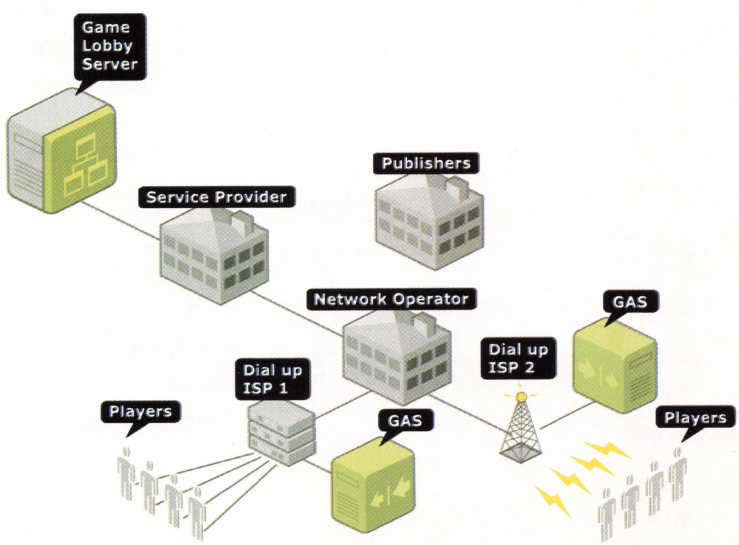


FIG.3 TERRAPLAY

Normally this information is sent straight out to each client. With Terraplay's Dynamic Subscription model, the server dynamically allocates precedence amongst the clients for this data. Thus when you move your steering wheel, the GAS will send this data back to people close to you with a higher priority than those further away from you.

In the diagram, you can see the racetrack has been divided into zones of importance. The "car in focus" could swerve at any time, and if he does you're going to need every millisecond of reaction time, so the refresh rate for positional network data is set high. The "car within sight" will effect the game visually, but is not so critical to the player as they will have more time to react to it. The "Car out of sight" can do pretty much whatever it likes, so the refresh rate for this car will be set much lower.

"...you're going to need every millisecond of reaction time..."

By changing the refresh rate of objects according to how quickly the player needs to know about them, the amount of data sent by the server to each client in a given amount of time is significantly reduced.

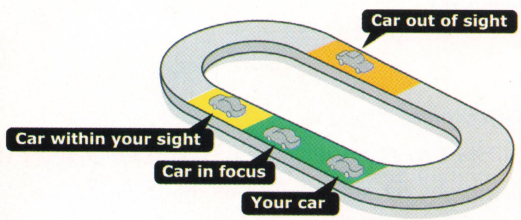


FIG.4 TERRAPLAY

The management of this subscription service is determined by the developer - they set the levels of refresh according to the specific application. This is particularly handy for addressing cross-platform gaming. On platforms where fewer resources are available to handle incoming data, the refresh rate can be biased even more towards the most immediate objects, so gamers with a high resource platform have less of an edge.

Adaptive Rate Control, or ACR, is a way of taking advantage of the DSM for compensating for network problems. This is simple enough to explain - the server keeps track of available bandwidth, and alters the subscription of the client to the DSM accordingly.

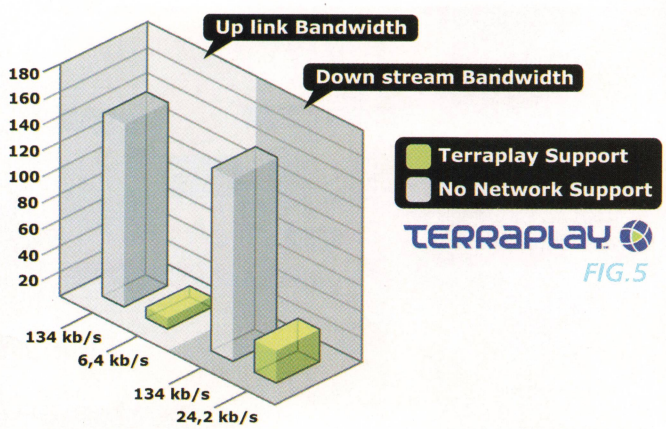


FIG.5

Thus in the example of figure 4, a client may receive data of all three cars when the bandwidth was high, but as network issues caused the bandwidth to drop, the ARC will automatically reduce the refresh rate of the third car, then the second car and so on to ensure that the maximum amount of critical data gets sent.

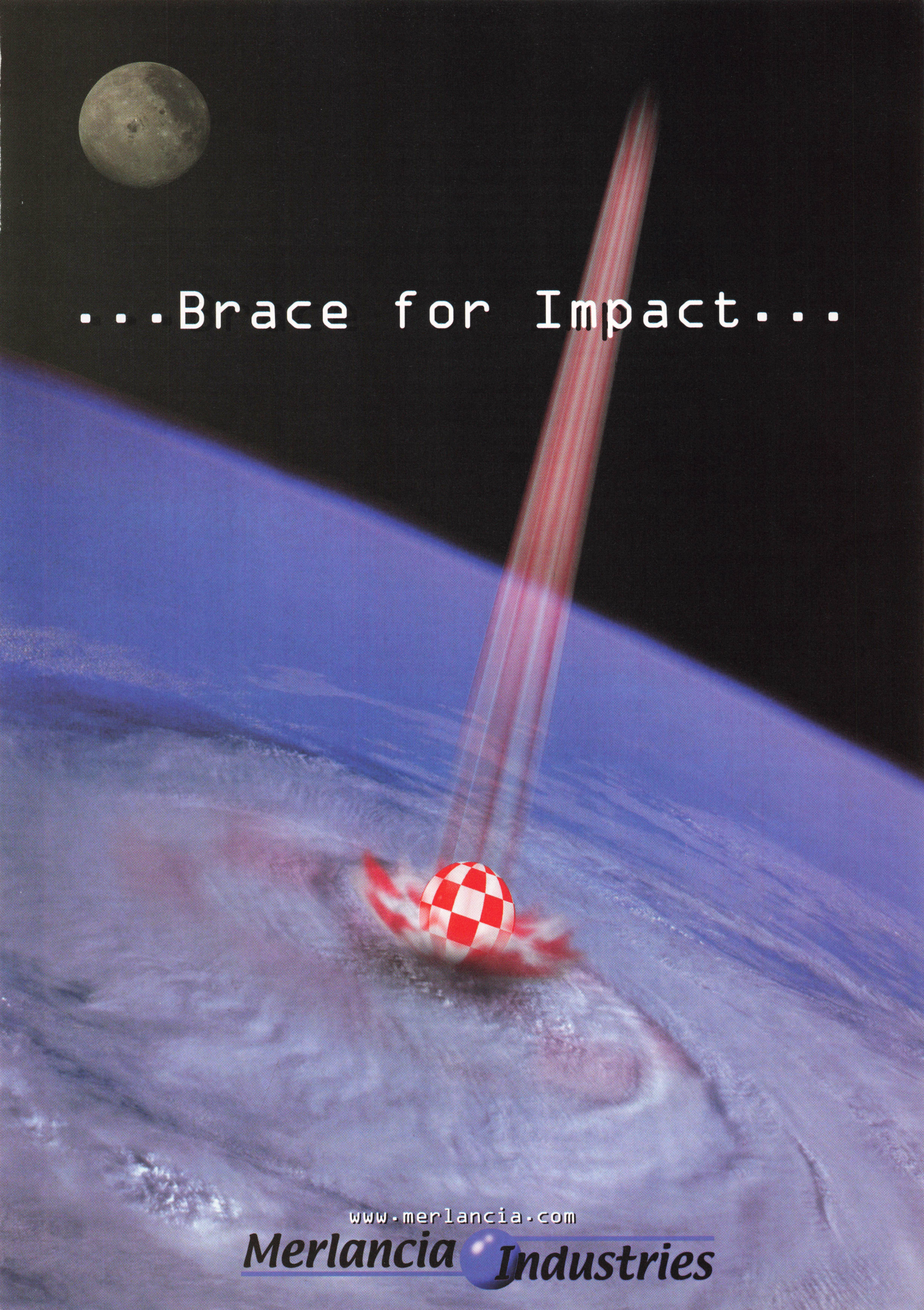
Looking forwards

Terraplay Systems are in a strong position with their technology. They have a product ready to go at the start of a market set to explode, which provides solutions to many of the problems that their market sector will face, and they come to it with strong partnerships, notably with Motorola and Ericsson.

Terraplay quote an example of a 22 player on-line soccer game where they claim downstream data dropping to a sixth and upstream to a twentieth with a Terraplay network (figure 5). If those figures are anything like realistic, their solution is not just going to save an awful lot of money in servers, it's also critically going to provide an improved gaming experience, which will keep the players coming back.

The partnership with Tao is a particularly interesting one. From Terraplay's viewpoint, they are multi-platform already, but this takes the Terraplay system into true platform neutral territory. Perhaps the more interesting side of the equation is that it gives OCPA members access to Terraplay's technology. As the OCPA companies are going to be working on many lower end and wireless platforms, they are going to be heavily dependant on reliable server performance to achieve satisfactory performance. Terraplay's efficiency, particularly given the variable nature of cellular networks, could be critically important.

As a closing thought, we can't help but feel that the future is likely to see Terraplay go full circle. Its technology started in Ericsson's compression lab, as it is basically a way of reducing bandwidth requirements. Games may be the leading application where this is important at the moment, but that's likely to change, and when it does, Terraplay could find new markets opening up to them. Perhaps the Terraplay DSM could be implemented into an MPEG 7 player, so that video images could be streamed online with the important parts being refreshed more often than the less important parts - and it's all very well having a nice 3D fish tank in your virtual office, but you don't want to miss what the boss is telling you when you pass under a bridge and the waving seaweed starts chewing up your remaining bandwidth, do you?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Watch Your Favourite MPEGs on TV!

A closer look at some video tools, a PowerPC native implementation of LhA and some Workbench utilities especially useful for programmers.

As you all know, one of the most popular video formats is MPEG. You might have a DVD player that can play MPEG movies, but downloading them from your computer to your separate DVD unit isn't possible just yet. This is where you need a Video CD, principally an MPEG file containing audio and video data burnt using a special format onto a CD which is readable by most DVD Players. So with Video CDs, you can watch your favourite MPEGs on your widescreen telly.

This is exactly what VCDimager will allow you to do. Also included in the package is a tool called VCDrip, with which you can rip MPEG files from Video CDs. This has been provided because many MPEG players for computer systems have poor support for Video CDs. Translating the Video CD data to MPEG is the preferred option (although some Amiga players like AMP2 can replay both MPEG and Video CD files).

There are two versions of VCDimager. The first is a tool from the Linux world (converted to Amiga by Sven Ottemann and yours truly) and like many pieces of Linux freeware it is constantly under developement. The vcdimager.lha archive contains the latest 'stable' version, recommended if you don't like to use beta versions of software. vcdimager_077.lha, meanwhile, contains the latest beta version (0.7.7), which offers much better performance. The PowerPC version (which uses WarpOS) is much faster in v0.7.7 due to a recompile with StormC-gcc.

There are plenty of options when it comes to using VCDImager (this originated on Linux, remember?), but the first thing you should be concerned about is what sort of Video CD you want to generate. 'vcd11' is the format best suited for your DVD Player, as this is the original Video CD standard which should be supported by all DVD players which offer VCD functionality. If your DVD player supports Video CD 2 or S-Video CD, you can use 'vcd2' or 'svcd' respectively. The default is vcd2 (although not supported by all DVD players, it allows higher resolution MPEG-2 video sequences to be converted).

Using a command line such as `vcdimager -tvcd11 vid1.mpg vid2.mpg vid3.mpg` would create three files for a Video CD (which would be treated as separate tracks). Using a CD Writer such as BurnIT, which supports the format in which VCDImager outputs its files, these tracks can then be burnt to CD.

Last but not least, vcdrip (included with with vcdimager 0.6.2) can be used to rip an MPEG from a VideoCD. To use it, point it at the .bin file of a Video CD, using `vcdrip -bin-file= filename.bin`. The resulting MPEG can then be played on your Amiga.

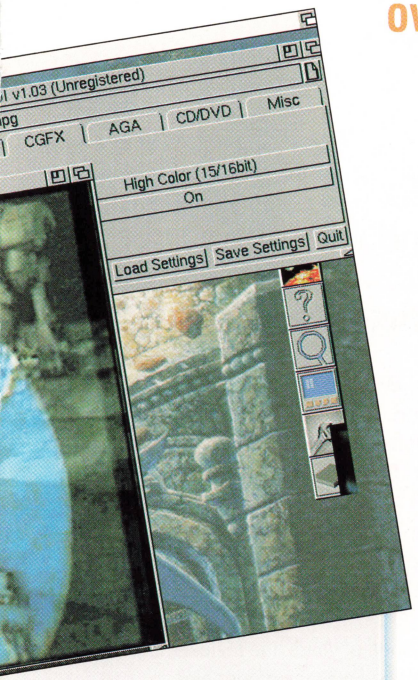
"The resulting MPEG can then be played on your Amiga."

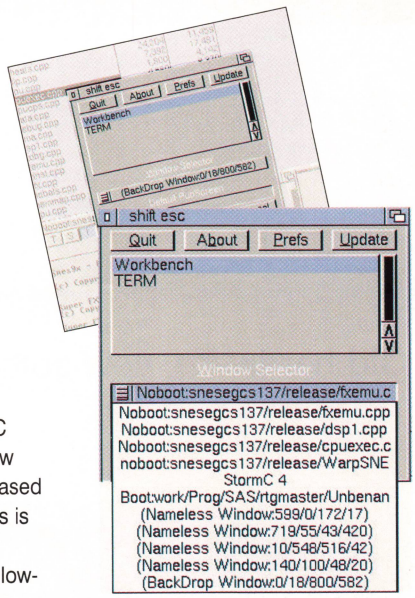
DVD on an

Sticking with the video theme, an ideal candidate for replaying your MPEG files - at least if you have a PowerPC equipped Amiga - is the latest version of AMP2 from Mathias Roslund. Version 2.03 comes with a nice GUI and supports MPEG, Video CD and S-Video CD formats as well as the CD-i format.

If you have a DVD Player in your Amiga, you can play your DVDs using AMP2. v2.03 is the first version which offers good DVD support (earlier betas of the program only played a select few DVDs), but the majority of Amigas just aren't powerful enough to play them (getting data fast enough from a DVD-ROM drive over even an accelerated Amiga IDE bus just isn't possible for smooth DVD playback - you may have better luck with a SCSI drive, if you can find and afford one!). But it's a neat feature if you do have the hardware.

"...a fair speed improvement for owners of WarpOS systems..."





Slow, Slow, Quick, Quick, Slow

It has been pointed out in recent times that the last released LhA-executable for the Amiga is quite old (there are some 68k versions which have a later version number but fewer features). Sven Ottemann has now rectified the situation by porting the latest Unix version of LhA (1.14i) to the Amiga. This version supports the newer compression types lh5, lh6 and lh7 not supported by the older Amiga version. msdos_sfx1 archives can also be dealt with.

LhA 1.14i is available for 020-060 68k Amigas, WarpOS and even as plain 68000 version (for all you A500 owners out there). It does, however, lack some features of the old Amiga version, including the ability to use the #? operator when archiving.

Archiving a handful of IFF files to gauge its speed showed a noticeable slowdown in the 68k version (see table, below), but a fair speed improvement for owners of WarpOS systems.

The speed of the PowerPC version might look a little slow when you consider the increased CPU power available, but this is mainly down to the old 68k version making good use of low-level assembly code, whereas this latest version is written completely in C. This also explains why the new 68k version is so much slower.

For what it's worth, it should also be mentioned that the archive generated by the new version of LhA was slightly smaller, although new archives are not compatible with the old version of LhA.

PowerPC users who want to keep up to speed with the latest version of the new LhA should visit Sven Ottemann's web site.

http://mus.urz.uni-magedeburg.de/~ottemann/

LhA: New versus Old

	Old 68k Version	New 68k Version	New WarpOS Version
Packing	16 seconds	32 seconds	9 seconds
Unpacking	3 seconds	3 seconds	2 seconds

Smells a Bit Fishy

From the Stone Age of Amiga tools (read: originally distributed on a Fish disk!) comes wKeys, a little-known but extremely useful program that, like ScreenSelect (see separate review, right) attempts to ease the pain of having too many windows open at once.

Sometimes you know exactly where the window you're after **is** in the pile, but you can't get it to the front quickly enough. With wKeys, you can set up some extremely useful keyboard shortcuts to cycle through windows and bring the one you need to the front, or send it to the back again once you're finished with it. Such a simple thing, but so effective, we just had to give it a mention. One can only hope such functionality will make it into AmigaOS 4 from the outset.

Tasty Selection

Sometimes, the old ones are the best - a saying that applies to bar-room jokes and Amiga shareware alike. ScreenSelect is one such utility which has survived the ravages of time and still proves itself to be an incredibly useful utility.

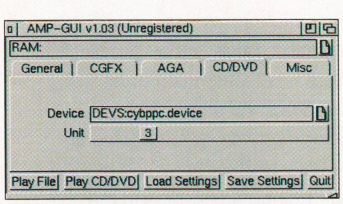
We've all experienced the situation - half a dozen screens open, each cluttered with windows. Likewise, we all know that cycling through screens and sifting through countless windows only makes sense when there are just a few of them to deal with, so what do you do if you have twice as many to sort through? This is where the ScreenSelect commodity from Jon Anders Haugum comes into its own.

With ScreenSelect running, a mere press of the Shift-Escape key combination (or whatever you fancy - you can define your own) pops it to the front (see screenshot, top). A list of active screens enables you to flick straight to the one you're after.

"Is that it?" you ask. Not at all. This is Active Shareware - we demand more features, and ScreenSelect doesn't disappoint. After you've selected a screen, you are then presented with a list of windows. Select the one you're after and - blam! - the window in question pops to the front and is activated for you. An Amiga without this tool installed is not a properly-equipped Amiga!

Steffen Haeuser

Amiga?



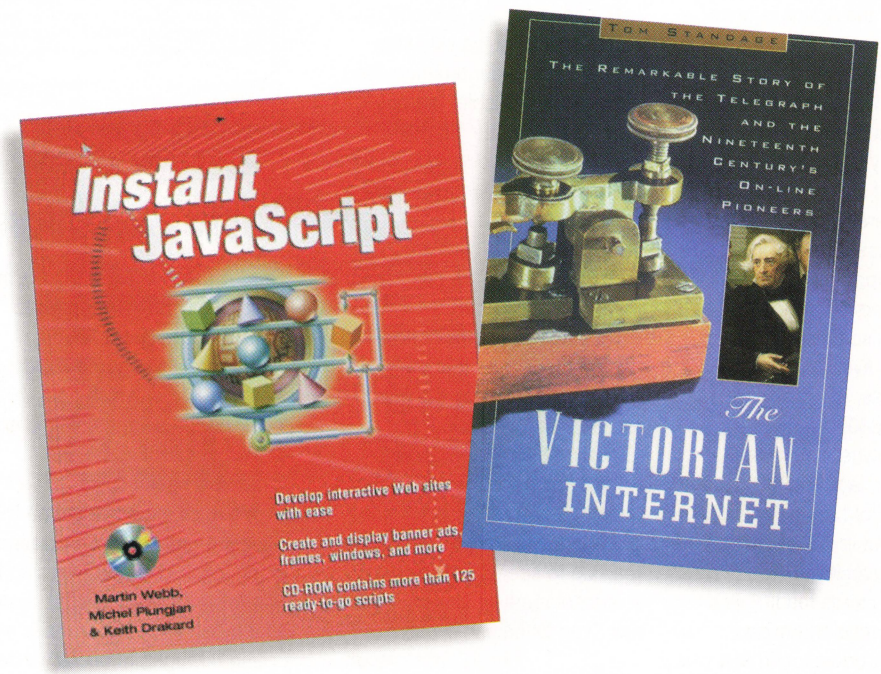
Due to a lot of optimizations, especially concerning audio/video synchronization (the most critical part of an MPEG player), AMP2 is the best MPEG/VCD/DVD player for the Amiga. There is simply a huge difference in speed between a modern MPEG player like this and some of the first ever MPEG players which appeared on the Amiga!

AMP2 supports real-time scaling of video, and with the overlay feature you can even resize the window while the video is playing, should your graphics card support the overlay feature. For the latest info on AMP2, tune in to the author's web site.

www.amidog.com

ACTIVE Media

Old hardware, new software, miscellaneous CD collections and web sites.



Instant JavaScript

- Book, 700pp
- Authors: Martin Webb, Michael Plungian and Keith Drakard
- Published by McGraw Hill
- ISBN: 0-070212994-8
- Price: £36.99 from Amazon.co.uk

This book describes itself as *"the ultimate collection of ready-to-use code and expert techniques."* It could reasonably be described as a 'JavaScript recipe book', but that doesn't do it justice. This isn't a reference book like O'Reilly's JavaScript: The Definitive Guide, but neither is it as heavy going.

Instant JavaScript quickly takes you through the basics of using JavaScript in web pages, with the aid of plenty of examples. Each chapter covers a different aspect of JavaScript, such as string handling, window and frame manipulation, cookies or dynamic HTML, and illustrates it with plenty of example scripts. These aren't simply snippets of code to show the syntax of a JavaScript component, but fully working scripts. You can drop these into your own pages verbatim, but the text explains the workings of the examples enough for you to modify them - or write your own alternatives from scratch. There is a CD-ROM containing all of the scripts used in the book, over 125 of them, ready for you to cut and paste into your own pages.

The last three chapters take up some 200 pages and cover creating complete applications in JavaScript, from a shopping basket system to a game of Tetris (although I couldn't get the latter to work in any of the Amiga browsers). Instant JavaScript did address the issues of the incompatibilities of different implementations of JavaScript, even between the same versions of the same browser running on different platforms, although predictably, it concentrated on Netscape and Internet Explore.

This is a large book, with a CD full of useful scripts, which makes the price tag reasonable. Most, if not all of this information could also be gleaned from various web sites, but it's up to you whether you want the convenience of having it all exactly where you can find it or whether you are prepared to go hunting for then relevant information whenever you are unsure of something. **NB**

The Victorian Internet

- Book, 239pp
- Author: Tom Standage
- Published by Walker and Company.
- ISBN: 0-8027 1342-4 (1998 hardback edition, pictured).
- Price: $9.60 (around £6.60) from Amazon.com (1999 paperback, ISBN 0425171698)

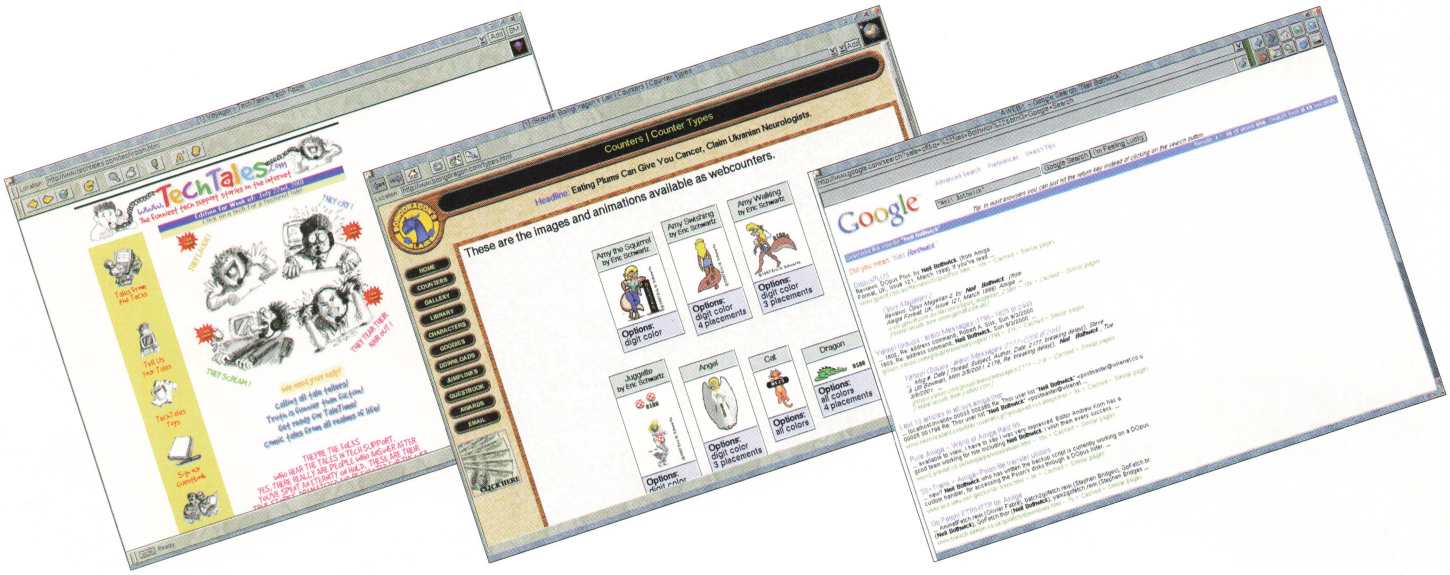
For thousands of years, the fastest method of communication was the carrier pigeon. This readable and well-researched book tells the story of how pigeons were replaced by modern electrical communications networks.

The telegraph was invented late in the eighteenth century as a cumbersome device for sending signals along a chain of towers fitted with large movable arms. In the early part of the nineteenth century, many people attempted to make an electric telegraph. As electrical variables such as resistance, capacitance and inductance were not clearly understood then, most failed. At last, in the 1830s, Cooke in England and Morse in the USA made working electric telegraphs. Morse used his famous code (almost certainly worked out by his assistant Vail) to record the output as dots and dashes on a reel of paper.

After a slow start, as at first it was hard to get anyone to see the point of sending messages through wires, the electric telegraph took off on both sides of the Atlantic. The ensuing boom closely resembled the start of the Internet. By the 1870s, telegraph cables had been laid all over the continents and across the ocean floors. The world was connected by a vast network, the prototype of the modern Internet.

Anyone using a modem is still sending messages through telegraph wires strung on telegraph poles. Only the digital codes used are faster, more complicated, and generated entirely automatically.

This excellent book shows how the modern network is closely based on the original telegraph network. It is full of entertaining details, and is a very good read if you are the slightest bit interested in the Internet. **DC**



These people really exist

➤ Website
➤ URL: www.techtales.com

I'm not saying anything like this happened when Amiga users called Wirenet, but most technical support departments have their fair share of callers who could most fairly be described as "intellectually challenged". Techtales.com contains many transcripts of allegedly true conversations between support staff and their less well-informed customers. The proportion of these that really happened will be somewhere between 0 and 100 percent, but it doesn't really matter. Anyone who has worked in any kind of customer support position, in any industry, will be able to relate to many of the stories on this site.

Counting squirrels

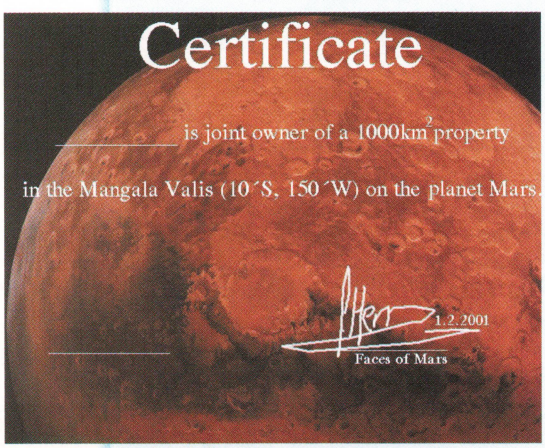
➤ Website
➤ URL: www.boingdragon.com/counters.html

Web sites offering hit counter services are two-a-penny. Actually they're even cheaper than that, with many sites offering counters for free. So what does a service have to do to encourage you to use them rather than going to someone else for such a service? Seeing as you're reading this in an Amiga magazine, offering Amiga inspired counters would be a good start. That's what Boing Dragon does, with several of their counters using animated characters from Eric Schwartz. Yes, you can ditch those boring old LCD or odometer style digits and have Amy the Squirrel show everyone how many visitors you've had.

I said WHAT?

➤ Website
➤ URL: www.google.com/search?q=%22Your+Name%22&btnG=Google+Search

How long have you been using the Internet, especially posting to mailing lists and/or newsgroups? If it's been more than a few months, you could be in for a shock. Go to your favourite search engine (we tried this with Google) and type in your name, enclosing it in quotes. Give the name you generally use when posting to mailing lists and newsgroups.
I found all sorts of things I'd forgotten I'd said, in places I'd forgotten I'd been, including some tearful words still on the CU Amiga web site that I wrote the day I was told the magazine was closing way back in 1998.
Go on, we dare you. Surprise yourself. **NB**



Brave New World

➤ CD-ROM
➤ From: APC&TCP
➤ Price: DM29.95 (around £9.50 or $13.90)

The first thing I noticed about this CD was that it was on a CDR. That's not unusual in these days of low unit sales of Amiga products, but this CD doesn't even have a label. Still, this is a strange hotchpotch of programs and documents vaguely related to a futuristic/scientific theme. There are guides various Sci-fi TV programs such as Babylon 5, Farscape and Space 1999. The Science section contains a multimedia history of the Titanic, an old version of the Scion genealogy program and some "Life" and artificial intelligence programs. There are also a variety of games.

Overall, Brave New World is a curious collection of games, utilities and documents, held together by a fairly tenuous theme. Most of them are rather old and many have appeared on previous CD collections. The range is wide enough that everyone is likely to find something of interest on here, but is that enough? NB



In Style! part 2

Install libraries correctly, sort out your tooltypes and polish off your scripts with some colourful eye candy.

Last month we covered all you need to create a basic Installer script. This month we will add a few bells and whistles. We will look at updating libraries and other shared resources, running external programs from Installer, configuring software while installing it and some of the extras added for the V44 Installer of OS 3.5+.

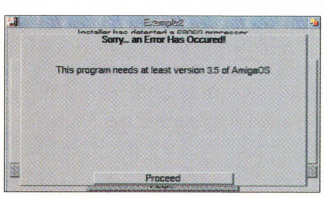
We have already shown how the (copylib) command will check the version of a file before installing it, but what happens if you have several libraries to install? You could put in multiple (copylib) commands but it looks a mess, is harder to maintain and makes extra work of adding or removing libraries in the package. Compare the code in the boxout below with that on the right.

```
(copylib¶
  (prompt 'Copying thingummy.library')¶
  (help #InstallHelp)¶
  (source 'Libs/thingummy.library')¶
  (dest 'LIBS:')¶
  (confirm)¶
)¶

(copylib¶
(prompt Copying wotsit.library')¶
(help #InstallHelp)¶
(source 'Libs/wotsit.library')¶
(dest 'LIBS:')¶
(confirm)¶
)¶

etc...
```

```
(foreach 'Libs' '#?.library'¶
  (copylib¶
     (prompt (cat 'Copying ' @each
     name))¶
       (help¶
          (cat¶
           'This will copy '
           @each-name ' to your
           libs drawer, '¶
           'unless you already have
           a newer version there.'¶
           )¶
       )¶
       (source (tackon 'libs' @each
       name))¶
       (dest 'LIBS:')¶
       (confirm)¶
   )¶
)¶
```



Above: Check that the target system is capable of running your program before installing it.

It is more compact and far easier to maintain. If a later version of your program needs an extra library, just pop it in the Libs drawer and the script will copy it. (foreach) takes three arguments, the path to the drawer containing the file, an AmigaDOS pattern for the file names and the statement to execute once for each matching file or directory. Each time the statement is executed, the @each-name variable is set to the name of the file or directory. @each-type is set to the object type, a positive number for a directory and negative for a file. (foreach) will not descend into subdirectories. If you needed to do

this, you could use @each-type to determine if an entry is a directory and call (foreach) again - although if you find yourself doing this, you may need to reconsider the layout of the files in your installation distribution to make things more manageable.

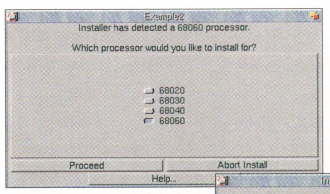
Configuring software on installation

It's all very well copying a few files to the correct places so the user can run your program, but it's not much fun if he has to spend time configuring it before it will work properly. You can do this for him from your Installer script. We've already seen how you can add assigns to user-startup, but there is far more you can do. There are three main ways you can set up a program from information collected during installation; icon tooltypes, an ASCII configuration file and sending messages to the program's ARexx port.

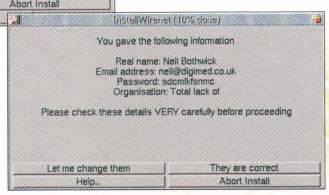
Which you use depends on where your program stores its settings, but the tooltypes method is easiest to implement in a script. You may have written an e-mail program that needs to know the user's mailbox address and password, or a paint program that lets the user choose where to save pictures, brushes and so on. To do the latter with tooltypes, use (askdir) to get the directory and store it in a variable. Remember what we said last month: you should ask these questions at the beginning of the installation process, even though you won't use the settings until after the program has been installed. When you have installed the program and its icon, use the following chunk of code:

```
(tooltype¶
    (dest (tackon #DestDir 'MyProg'))¶
    (settooltype 'PicturePath'
    #PicPath)¶
    (settooltype 'BrushPath'
    #BrushPath)¶
)¶
```

#DestDir, #PicPath and #BrushPath are all variables for which values were obtained earlier in the script. You can also remove a tooltype by omitting the second argument to (settooltype), e.g. "(settooltype 'BrushPath')". (tooltype) also accepts a (confirm) option which makes it prompt the user first. It's unlikely you will want to use this, but if you do, you'll also need the (prompt) and (help) parameters.



Left: Wherever possible, set suitable default values in requesters.



Right: Your script can gather various configuration information and send it to the program later on.

Creating configuration files and scripts

What if your program doesn't store configuration in the icon? If your config file is plain ASCII, you can use (textfile) to create it. Taking the example of an e-mail program, you could use the following:

```
(textfile¶
  (dest (tackon #DestDir'MyProg.cfg'))¶
  (append (cat 'MailAddress=' #MailAddress '\n'))¶
  (append (cat 'POP3server=' #POP3 '\n'))¶
  (append (cat 'SMTPserver=' #SMTP '\n'))¶
  (append (cat 'Login=' #Login '\n'))¶
  (append (cat 'Password=' #Password '\n'))¶
  (include 'Defaults.cfg')¶
)¶
```

You have to explicitly include the line feed for each (append), otherwise everything appears on one long line, unless that's what you want to happen of course. (append) adds the given text to the file, (include) adds the contents of the named file. This can be used to include standard defaults. If the file given in (dest) already exists, it will be overwritten. If you want to add to an existing file, use something like this:

```
(textfile¶
  (dest (tackon #DestDir 'MyProg.cfg'))¶
  (include (tackon #DestDir 'MyProg.cfg'))¶
  (append ......¶
)¶
```

The third way to configure a program requires it to have an ARexx port. In this case, you use (textfile) to create an ARexx script that contains the commands to start your program, send the configuration changes, save them and close the program. Obviously the details will depend on your program, but you would probably use two (include) sections with some (append) lines in between. Then you need to execute the script with

```
(rexx 'Setup.rexx')¶
```

You would normally use it like this, but you can also use the (confirm), (prompt) and (help) parameters as elsewhere. What (rexx) does for ARexx scripts, (execute) does for DOS scripts and (run) does for executables. Each one returns the result of the operation, so you should check that it worked before proceeding, like this:

```
(set res¶
  (run (cat 'LhA x MyArchive.lha ' #DestDir))¶
)¶
(if¶
  (> res 0)¶
  (abort 'something went wrong')¶
)¶
```

(abort) exits the script, showing the message given. ▶

No speaka da Engleesh?

The user is expected to interact with your Installer script, replying to any questions you ask and reading your prompts and help text. But what if his (or her) native language is not the same as yours? Installer has this covered with the @language variable. This is set when the script starts, from one of two sources. Installer used to use the LANGUAGE tooltype in the script's icon, but this appears to have been abandoned for V43. Now, the @language variable is set to the value of the current locale, defaulting to "English". This also localises the standard Installer texts.

```
(SetEnglish)¶
        (if (= @language 'franÁais') (SetFrench))¶
        (if (= @language 'deutsch') (SetGerman))¶
```

The above code will set the appropriate strings for French or German, and English for everyone else. It means you are setting the English strings and then overwriting them, so make sure you translate all of your text for each language, or you could end up with a mixture of the target language and English - not good!

Then you add the following procedures to your script, although you may want to add a little more localisation than this:

```
(procedure SetEnglish¶
    (set #Hello 'Hi there')¶
)¶
(procedure SetFrench¶
    (set #Hello 'Bonjour')¶
)¶
(procedure SetGerman¶
    (set #Hello 'Guten tag')¶
)¶
```

As all the messages are contained in a separate block for each language, adding another language is simply a matter of giving the block of text to whoever is doing the translation for you and adding another (if) statement to the script. If you need translation into a range of languages, you could consider using the Amiga Translators' Organization (ATO). You will find more information on their services at http://ato.vapor.com.

Checking the target system

For many users, your installer will be the first they see of your program, and first impressions count for a lot. If your script doesn't work they aren't likely to have much confidence in the software itself. This means you should test the script thoroughly, on as many different setups as possible. If you have a removable drive like a Zip, make a bootable disk and install a standard Workbench on it, along with any other software you state that people should have in advance, such as MUI. Before you do anything else, make a backup of this disk, say by archiving it to a file on your hard drive. Now you can test your installer on here and go back to the standard setup by erasing the disk and restoring the backup. It is easy to forget that the useful little library you installed five years ago isn't part of a standard Workbench installation. Ask others to test the installer, not your beta testers because they will already have all the files needed to run the program from previous tests.

"...your installer will be the first they see of your program... first impressions count for a lot."

There are times you need to know more about the system you are installing to, such as ensuring it meets the minimum requirements of your program. If you use anything that isn't part of Workbench, test for it before starting the installation. Even if your readme states that MUI is required, check the version of muimaster.library - not everyone reads readmes. Check the Workbench version too - you don't want someone hassling you because your program won't run on their WB 1.3 A500. You may even want to install different files depending on the user's CPU. The (database) function does most of this and more. The boxout below contains an example of checking for suitable OS version, memory and CPU, then asking the user which CPU version they want to install, using (database) to set the default.

```
;Check system meets min. requirements¶

(procedure CheckSystem¶

; Check OS version¶
(set #RC (run "version version 39"))¶
(if (= #RC 5) (abort #MinOSError))¶

; Check memory¶
(set #TotalRAM (+ (database "total-
mem")))¶
(if (< #TotalRam #MinRAM) (abort
#MinMemError))¶

; Check CPU¶
(set #CPU (database "cpu"))¶
(if¶
   (< #CPU "68020")¶
   (abort #MinCPUError)¶
)¶
(set #DefCPU 0)¶
(if (= #CPU "68030") (set #DefCPU 1))¶
(if (= #CPU "68040") (set #DefCPU 2))¶
(if (= #CPU "68060") (set #DefCPU 3))¶

(set #CPUchoice¶
   (askchoice¶
      (prompt #CPUPrompt)¶
      (help #CPUHelp)¶
      (choices¶
      '\x1B[2p68020'¶
      '68030'¶
      '68040'¶
      '68060'¶
      )¶
      (default #DefCPU)¶
      )¶
   )¶

(set #CPUext (select #CPUchoice ("")
(".030") (".040") (".060")))¶

)¶
```

The first part uses the (run) statement with the AmigaDOS version command to check if the user has a high enough version of Workbench. The second part uses (database) to check the total memory available. (database) returns all values as strings, so 16MB "16777216" appears higher than 100MB "104857600" ("16" is greater than "10"). We fix this by converting the result to an integer, simply by adding nothing to it. (+) converts all arguments to integers. (database) returns the total free memory, not the total installed memory, so bear this in mind when setting the minimum memory point in your script.

The third part checks the CPU and asks the user which processor they want to install for. (database) returns the CPU as a string, so we need to convert this to an integer to be used as the default for (askchoice). A series of (if) statements looks klunky, but is the only reasonable way to do this in the absence of any case or elseif options. We then use (select) to convert the response - also an integer - into a filename extension. Now any copy commands can use the following:

```
(source (cat 'MyFile' #CPUext))
```

provided all your CPU specific files use a consistent naming convention. You could use this for batch copying with (foreach) using this piece of code:

```
(source¶
   (if (exists (cat 'MyFile'#CPUext))¶
      (cat 'MyFile' #CPUext)¶
      ('MyFile')¶
   )¶
)¶
```

You may have noticed the odd text in the first choice. Older versions of installer only supported non-proportional fonts, so later ones use these by default. Adding '\x1B[2p' to the start of the first choice forces the use of proportional fonts. So, your installer not only does its job properly, but looks its best at the same time!

Neil Bothwick



Above: The latest Installer can handle pictures and sounds.

"We fix this by converting the result to an integer, simply by adding nothing to it."

Extras

OS 3.5 added some extra functions to Installer. Most of these are concerned with the visual appearance of the installation process, although there is also the option to step backwards through an installation. The first of the visual options is (effect). This causes Installer to open on its own screen with either a linear or radial gradient, depending on whether the second argument is 'horizontal' or 'radial'. The screen is a clone of the Workbench screen, you cannot set the screenmode from the script.

The first argument specifies the position of the Installer window on this screen and is one of; 'upper_left', 'upper_center', 'upper_right', 'center_left', 'center', 'center_right', 'lower_left', 'lower_center' or 'lower_right'. The final two arguments are the start and end colours for the gradient effect, usually given as a hexadecimal integer.

To have a screen fading from blue at the top to red at the bottom, with the installer window in the middle, you would use:

```
(effect 'center' 'horizontal' $ff0000 $0000ff)¶
```

(showmedia) is used to display images, text or animations on the Installer screen, or to play sounds. The user must have a datatype for the file you wish to show. To display a picture in a borderless window at the default size you would use something like this:

```
(showmedia 'testpic' 'images/testpic.ilbm'
'upper_center' 'none' 0)¶
```

The first argument is the name of the media object, used later by other commands. Next is the filename and the position on the screen, using the same parameters as (effect). The fourth argument is the size of the window to be opened ('none' actually means 'get the size from the datatype'). The final argument is 0 for a borderless window or 1 for a standard window. When you want to remove this image use "(closemedia testpic)".
Note that the name is enclosed in quotes in (openmedia) but not in (closemedia).

While displaying pictures in this way could be considered mere eye candy, there are several other uses. If you offer a choice of icons, you could display a picture of the different options while asking the user to choose. If your installer has to carry out a lengthy operation, you could play a sound when it has finished. Another use would be to show some informative text too large to fit into a normal Installer requester window.

Warp Factor 3D!

Part One



Always wanted to code in 3D but not known which x,y,z co-ordinate to start from?

3D hardware and performance is a hot topic these days - it's even getting quite warm on the Amiga, with a small handful of 3D graphics cards now available thanks to a trio of PCI solutions. Hardware, however, is only one half of the puzzle - software is required to make use of it.

This software comes in form of a graphics driver which sits on top of an existing 2D API (Application Programmers' Interface) like CyberGraphX or Picasso 96. On the Amiga, this 3D API is called Warp3D and is what Direct3D or Glide is to Windows, DRI (Direct Rendering Infrastructure) is to Linux or Rave is to MacOS (or at least was, for a while).

Some people might argue that, *"we do not need a low-level Interface, we only need OpenGL"* - but OpenGL is a high level API which also needs to access drivers. The common way to do this is to let an OpenGL implementation (such as MesaGL or MiniGL) use the low-level drivers for access to the hardware (on Linux, for example, MesaGL uses DRI as its driver).

Even aside from this, a low-level API often delivers better performance (as with games, which only need a rasterizer). Sometimes - if you only need a primitive rasterizer for your program - it also simplifies coding.

In our new Masterclass, we will be showing you how to write programs using Warp3D. In this, the first part, we'll be discussing the basics that are critical to understanding the functionality of the API, then we'll be able to start actually producing something next month.

Starting Warp3D

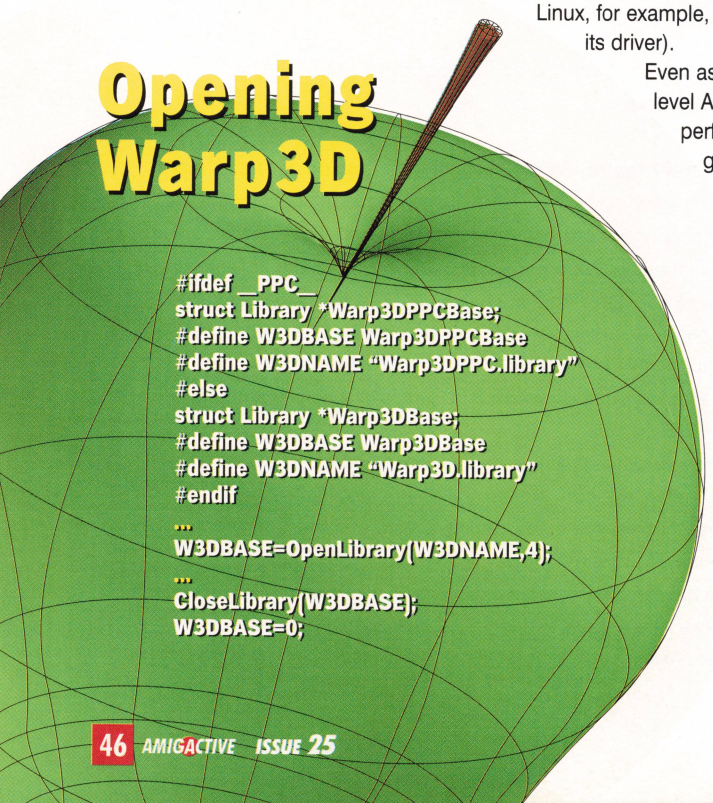
Warp3D is a library-based API. There are two libraries - one for 68k programs and one for (WarpUP-based) PowerPC native programs. Both libraries work in the same way, the only difference is which library you open: Warp3D.library or Warp3DPPC.library (and of course the name of the base variable). We recommend using at least version 4 of Warp3D, as it contains plenty of useful features over and above earlier versions of the API. Some of the latest features of Warp3D 4.2 will be discussed later on in this Masterclass.

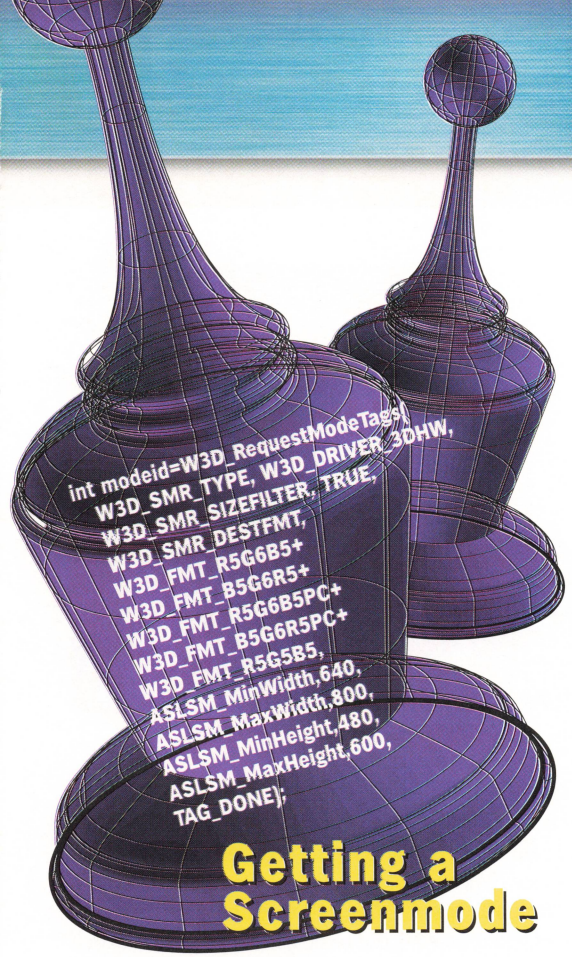
Opening Warp3D (left)

The first step after opening the library is to open a display. In the case of Warp3D, this is a standard AmigaOS bitmap. You can either get this bitmap by using AllocBitmap (to blit it later on-screen, useful for handling Workbench windows, for example), or you can just open a standard AmigaOS screen or window.

We recommend that you use Warp3D's own screenmode requesting - or BestModeID - function instead of the ones from graphics.library or CGX/P96, as this function will guarantee that the only screenmodes listed are those which provide 3D hardware acceleration for the 3D chipset being used (the S3 Virge of the Cybervision/3D, for example, supports hardware acceleration only on screens which are 15-bit in depth).

"We recommend that you use Warp3D's own screenmode requesting function..."





Getting a Screenmode

Getting a screenmode (above)
The code above shows that you should never assume a specific colour format being present. If you want to be sure, it is best to support all existing 16-bit formats, plus R5G5B5 for the CV/3D (if your program is going to run fast enough on the old Virge chipset, anyway!). Of course, this means some extra effort to make sure that the textures will be available in the correct format. Note that the "screen format" and the "texture format" can be different. You should avoid 8-bit formats for 3D acceleration - not all 3D chipsets support 8-bit modes and you don't usually get a performance advantage anyway.

Allocation of Double / Triple Buffering Buffers

```
buf1 = AllocScreenBuffer(myscreen,0,
SB_SCREEN_BITMAP);
if (buf1)
{
  buf2 = AllocScreenBuffer(myscreen,0,0);
  if (buf2)
  {
    buf3 = AllocScreenBuffer(myscreen,0,0);
  }
}
if (!buf3)
{
  // Do error handling here
}
else
{
  bm = buf1->sb_BitMap;
}
...
// Close buffers again at the end of the program
if (buf1) FreeSceenBuffer(buf1) ;
if (buf2) FreeScreenBuffer(buf2) ;
if (buf3) FreeScreenBuffer(buf3) ;
```

"...you have to ensure that all bitmaps used will end up in the video memory of the 3D card..."

After you've got a ModeID for the screen to be opened, the next step is to actually open the screen. This can be done with OpenScreenTags. Something to consider now is the issue of double- or triple-buffering. If you only use single-buffering, you'll usually end up with a very flickery screen.

Buffer allocation (below left)
To use double- or triple-buffering alongside 3D hardware rendering you have to ensure that all bitmaps used will end up in the video memory of the 3D card - not in the Amiga's Fast RAM - otherwise it won't work. This can be achieved using the AmigaOS' screen buffer system (in the example, below left, 'myscreen' would be the name of the screen opened with OpenScreenTags).

Of course, in the case of displaying a 3D image in a Workbench window, you cannot use this method. In this case, you should use AllocBitMap to allocate a friend-bitmap. Make sure that BMF_MINPLANES and BMF_DISPLAYABLE are set if you use this method, so that the bitmap ends up in video RAM and not in the Amiga's Fast RAM.

After you've opened your display, you'll need a Warp3D Graphics Context. This context is the base variable which you use for all 3D operations (like the RastPort for 2D Operations). This is easy to create...

Creating a context (below right)
The only thing to think about here is the W3D_CC_DOUBLEHEIGHT tag, which should be set to TRUE if you use "ScrollVPort-style-double buffering". In all other cases (and definitely in case of the triple buffering shown above), you should set this to FALSE. Should w3dcontext result to NULL, the variable w3derror will contain an error code. ▶



Creation of the Warp3D Graphics Context

Displaying data

Before any data is displayed, you would normally need to load some textures (which we will be discussing in part two of this Masterclass). But, if you are going to use Flat or Gouraud shading, you can start drawing at once.

"This lock should be kept for a very short time...

First, however, you will need to "Lock the hardware" using the function W3D_LockHardware(). This allocates the 3D Hardware for your private use and is required, despite using a context switch, as it internally calls a CGX/P96 function. This lock should be kept for a very short time, else the system might crash. Also, while you keep the lock, some system functions like "printf" are absolutely forbidden. If you use them, you will cause a crash, as CGX and Warp3D will try to simultaneously lock the Bitmap (they do not know anything about each other).

A better method for collecting debug information while your hardware is locked - if you have to do this - is using "kprintf". The lock is freed again using W3D_UnlockHardware(). It is important to note that whenever you call Warp3D's 3D functions, the hardware **always** needs to be locked.

When actually displaying something on screen, we have to take care of Multibuffering. Warp3D needs to know whenever the drawing region is changed, which is achieved by calling W3D_SetDrawRegion. Aside from the W3D_Context structure (defined previously), this function gets a bitmap, a y-offset and a W3D_Scissor structure. The y-offset would equal the new y-offset to be used in case of ScrollVPort-based Doublebuffering, else it would be 0. The W3D_Scissor region is usually set to (0,0,width-1,height-1). If you use a different value you can define which parts of the display will be updated. The scissoring can also be manipulated independently from the drawing region using W3D_SetScissor.

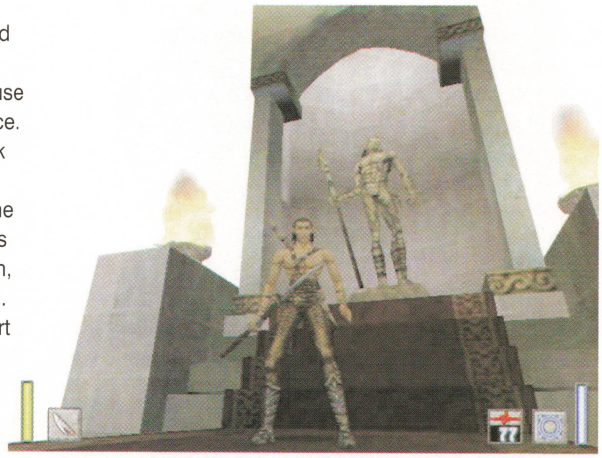
If you are displaying your 3D graphics in a Workbench window, where you have only one buffer, you would not have to call W3D_SetDrawRegion. Instead, you write into a buffer allocated with AllocBitmap and then use ClipBlit to blit it into the window. You should not render directly into the bitmap of a Workbench window.

For screens, it is recommended to use ChangeScreenBuffer for Multibuffering, though you might want to alternatively include support for ScrollVPort, if a user is still using an old Workbench emulation which does not yet support ChangeScreenBuffer (using a double height screen).



W3D_Vertex

```
typedefstruct
{
    W3D_Float x,y;
    W3D_Double z;
    W3D_Float w;
    W3D_Float u,v,tex3d;
    W3D_Color color;
    W3D_ColorRGB spec;
    W3D_Float l;
} W3D_Vertex;
```



Above: Corvus is primitive. No, sorry... made of primitives.

Is Warp3D primitive?

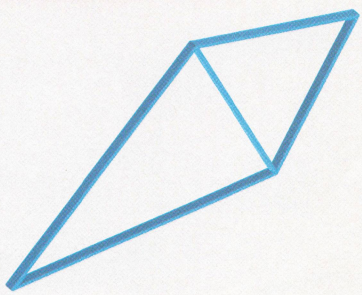
The term "primitive", used in conjunction with 3D hardware, refers to a small, easily created flat object in 3D space. When you draw such objects (with whatever API: Warp3D, OpenGL, Direct3D etcetera) you "split" your complex object (your basic elf with a longbow like Corvus from Heretic II, say) into lots of primitives. All primitives are then drawn so that they appear together as a single object. Warp3D supports the following primitives:

- Points: **Just points.**
- Lines: **Just lines.**
- Triangle: **A simple triangle, consisting of three points.**
- Triangle Strips: **Several triangles which have one side in common.**
- Triangle Fans: **Several triangles which have one point in common.**

It should be noted that points are usually emulated in software, so they should be avoided. Lines are supported by the majority of 3D hardware, though, and Triangles, Triangle Strips and Triangle Fans are supported by all 3D chipsets.

Most 3D engines do not operate in triangles - they operate in polygons. How does one draw a polygon, then? This is easy. You just have to implement a function

Polygons



A simple polygon made up of two triangles which share a common side - i.e. a Triangle Strip.

which draws the polygon in the form of a Triangle Strip or Triangle Fan. It makes sense to limit the polygons allowed for our 3D engine to convex polygons, in order to simplify things (polygons are convex if you can connect any two points inside the polygon with a straight line, without the line going outside the polygon. See diagram, below). Of course, when you prepare your graphics data you have to be careful that you only define convex polygons. If a polygon is not convex, just split it into several polygons that are.

It is worth noting at this point that with the latest version of Warp3D (4.2), Vertex-Arrays are supported - we will be providing more details in a future installment of this Masterclass.

The basis for all primitives is a structure called W3D_Vertex (a Vertex is a 3D point which is part of a primitive) - the boxout on the far left shows you how this structure is defined.

Where's my pretty polygon?

To draw a simple polygon (or triangle) on the screen, all we need to begin with are the x and y screen coordinates of the primitive and its colour value. We could use the normal graphics.library functions for this, but we'll soon want to draw our triangle in 3D: something which cannot be done with graphics.library.

The x and y coordinates are floating point numbers (floats), not integers, as with graphics.library. This may seem strange at first, but it makes sense. 3D APIs - like Warp3D - support Subpixels - pixels between two visible pixels - for better accuracy, so that textures won't "jump" when rotated. To be able to provide Subpixels, we have to use floats.

It should also be pointed out that the colour ranges of Warp3D differ from the usual ones for AmigaOS. While we may be used to using 0-255 as our range, Warp3D uses a range of 0-1 (0 being the lowest colour intensity, 1 being the highest). Additionally, there is now a fourth colour value, the so-called "alpha value" which determins the transparency of a vertex. A vertex with an alpha value of 1.0 is "completely opaque" (the opposite of transparent). This alpha value will only be used in certain modes of Warp3D. All of the values - r,g,b,a (red, green, blue and alpha) are of course floats.

"It makes sense to limit the polygons for our 3D engine to convex polygons, in order to simplify things."

Further reading

While you digest what we've talked about in the first part of our Masterclass, there are a couple of books which you may wish to seek out. While they won't teach you Warp3D or OpenGL, they explain the principles of computer graphics and are recommended reading for anyone who wants to learn the technical issues involved with both 2D and 3D graphics. Both books are published by Addison-Wesley.

- **Introduction to Computer Graphics**, Foley, van Dam et. al., Addison-Wesley. 650 pages. ISBN: 0201609215 (£37.99 from Amazon.co.uk)
- **Computer Graphics: Principles and Practice**, Foley, van Dam et. al, Addison-Wesley. 1200 pages. ISBN: 0201848406 (£42.99 from Amazon.co.uk)

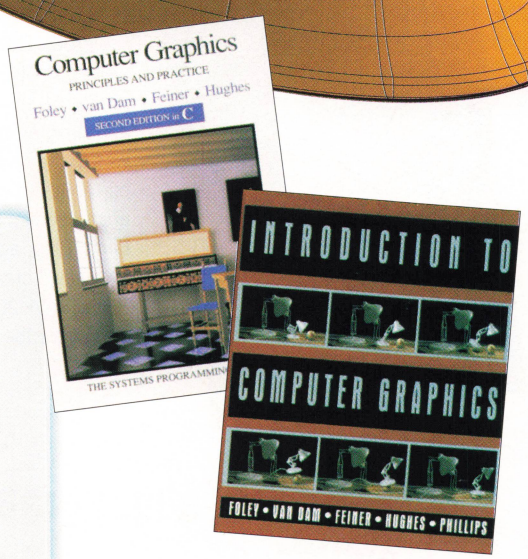
In the next part of this tutorial we'll finally get some 3D graphics displayed on screen, explain the different "states" of Warp3D and talk about the Z-Buffer. We'll even have some example code for you to get your teeth into. See you next month!

Steffen Haeuser A

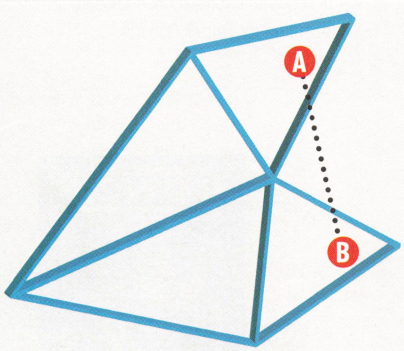
Warp3D uses a different colour range to the standard 0-255 RGB values you may be familiar with. The 0-1 scale means that colours are represented differently, thus:

Red:	**1,0,0,1**
Green:	**0,1,0,1**
Blue:	**0,0,1,1**
Yellow:	**1,1,0,1**
Black:	**0,0,0,1**
White:	**1,1,1,**

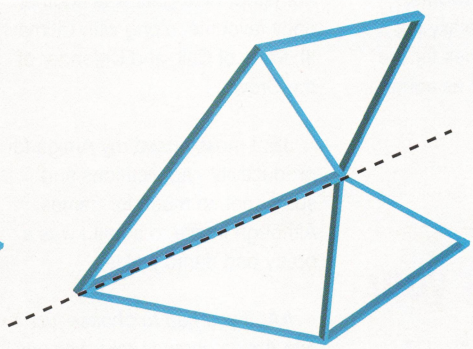
Some Colour Values



Right: Recommended reading for 3D graphics buffs.



A concave polygon: Joining any two points using a straight line cannot be achieved inside the polygon.



Turning this concave polygon into two convex polygons is simple - split it down the middle.

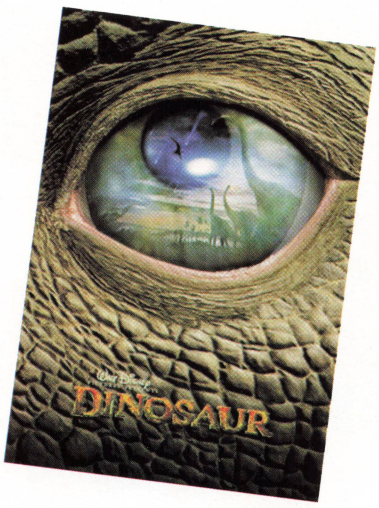


Pat Roberts, Steven Haun and Jeremy Engleman are hoping to cash in on the mobile computing sector with more than a little help from the AmigaDE.

On July 16, Amiga announced a partnership with a fresh new games company with a wealth of experience in the entertainment industry. Edivision, whose first title, Jackpot, is currently in development for the Sharp Zaurus, plans to set up three development labels for ports, original games and utilities. But how much of a gamble are they taking in developing exclusively for the AmigaDE? *Amiga Active* spins the roulette wheel and asks the trio to place their bets.

Amiga Active: *First of all, tell us a little about what you did before setting up Edivision. Who have you worked for, what did you do and what have you learnt?*

Patrick Roberts: I was (and still am until Edivision becomes profitable) a visual effects artist and programmer. My last project was Disney's Dinosaur, and currently I'm working on an animated film at Dreamworks. Long, long, ago in a galaxy far, far away, I created games for the PET and Vic20, as well as some demos for the C64.



"It's all about grabbing your audience, sucking them in and making them want more."

Steven Haun: My history - and present - is in producing documentaries, music videos and features. I've also spent many years producing EFX shots for television and films. Too many shows to list, for all of the major networks and studios.

Jeremy Engleman: I've worked in several areas of entertainment, film, video, console and PC gaming. I have learned that people will pay to be entertained.

AA: *Elaborate a little on your past experience of Amiga - what are your favourite early Amiga games, for example - and why?*

PR: My first Amiga experience was hogging a friend's A1000 that he had received early as part of Commodore developer program. My favourite early game was Barbarian - I was totally blown away with the graphics and used to play it non-stop. Shanghai was another early favourite, along with Ultima III, Ports of Call, and Defender of the Crown.

JE: I mostly used my Amiga for productivity - applications and such - not so much for games. Although I have to admit I was a pretty bad demo junkie.

AA: *If you had to choose just one Amiga game to take with you to a desert island, which one would it be?*

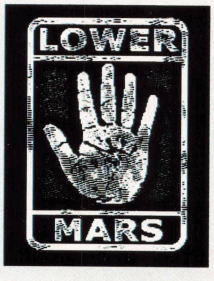
PR: I think I'd take Shadow of the Beast because no matter how long I was stuck on that island I would never be able to finish it!

AA: *What entertainment (particularly games) experience do you each bring to Edivision?*

PR: I've been an avid computer game nut (and sometimes creator/programmer) since the Commodore PET, so I like to think I have a pretty good grasp of what works in games with that much history. All three of us have numerous consoles and loads of games as well. I've written a lot of code for 2D and



Above: Shadow of the Beast, a classic Amiga game and ideal desert island companion for Patrick Roberts.



3D graphics - mostly for photoreal visualization - much of it optimised in assembly on SGIs.

SH: I've played games all my life from Pong on the Commodore, Pinball and Asteroids in the arcades to every console and PC platform. I work in the entertainment business 24/7 and I have an understanding of what it takes to get the audience's attention. This is what I bring to Edivision - not only the ability to produce games but the aptitude to understand the marketplace and create titles that will entertain.

JE: As I've said, I've worked in so many areas of entertaining that I think I have a pretty solid understanding of what makes entertainment entertaining. I have worked on several PC titles, as well as console titles, including Riven: The Sequel to Myst, Vigilante 8 and Star Wars: Demolition.

AA: *How will your experience in film and television help you in creating addictive new games for the mobile computing sector?*

PR: I view games as interactive films. You need the same elements for both to be successful: a great story, characters or a cause you care about, pleasing visuals and sound. All games, no matter if it's a simple puzzle game or an RPG, need these.

SH: It's all about grabbing your audience, sucking them in and making them want more. This is the goal of a film and television producer. It should be the goal of a games producer. Jeremy, Pat and I are all of the same mindset when it comes to what we like and dislike - and we dislike a lot. We're here to change that, it's our time to put out there what we believe is missing. Between us, we have over a century of knowledge to draw from that expands through movies, TV and games. We believe that what we like, others will too. We will have to be addicted to a game before it gets released.

JE: I think our experience will help us bring a sense of quality and polish that sometimes the games sector lacks. The film world is so hyper-quality oriented, that it has given us a great sense of detail.

AA: *What style of entertainment are you focused on for your PDA projects? 2D, 3D, rendered or hand-drawn graphics, shoot-em-ups or puzzlers?*

PR: Right now, it's games we feel will sell well to the largest PDA demographic - i.e. business people. Once we have Edivision afloat and profitable I'm sure we'll be venturing into more gamer-like titles.

SH: I agree with Pat. This is a new adventure with the AmigaDE. We want to take it slow and do it right. Go after the market that is currently there and then venture into other areas.

AA: *What, in particular, excites you about the AmigaDE? Which parts are you looking forward to using most?*

"The audience will evolve and change, but whatever the device, they will always want something fun to do."



Above: Edivision's first title in development, Jackpot!

SH: It's exciting to be involved in something at the beginning. Also, to be partnered with Amiga is a fantastic opportunity. We get to go wherever the AmigaDE goes.

AA: *You've stated that you will have three development labels - one for original games, one for ports and one for utilities. When will these be set up?*

PR: Lower Mars (www.lowermars.com) is the first label, which is for original titles. The others will be set up and launched as we see how the market grows and changes.

SH: We will bring people on as we see fit. Again, we don't want to grow too big too fast. It's all about quality.

AA: *What are your thoughts on the promised scalability of the AmigaDE? How do you see your audience evolving (and how quickly) as the AmigaDE begins to support more platforms aside from PDAs?*

PR: At first I think the market will be almost all PDA owners, and I see the audience evolving very slowly to desktops. If Sharp ships 7 million PDAs as they plan to, us Amiga users out there will make up a very small percentage.

SH: That's a good question, and one that I have asked as well. It's a new platform in an economy that's having some problems. I think it's off to a slow start and will pick up as long as it's being supported by the economy. That's part of the excitement, the unknown.

JE: It remains to be seen. The audience will evolve and change, but whatever the device, they will always want something fun to do.

AA: *You've mentioned that you may be creating a 3D engine for use on the Zaurus - isn't this something that is already being done by Amiga as part of the DE, in the form of Ami3D?*

PR: For gaming, you want very specific code to squeeze the most out of the hardware. Most likely our engine would be a 2.5D engine with some hacks.

AA: *We understand your first title will be an electronic casino - how much of a gamble do you feel you are taking by developing exclusively for the AmigaDE?*

PR: Practically none. We're confident Amiga will be on PocketPC as well as Zaurus, which are the two main platforms we would aim Jackpot! at.

SH: We feel very comfortable developing for Amiga. We trust them and know that they are out there every day pushing their technology.

JE: It had better not be a gamble. That is the whole point: whatever device rises and falls, our code will be able to run on another. It should be money in the bank.





Edivision's first development label, Lower Mars (www.lowermars.com), may not have any content on its web site, but their neat little 'interactive' logo may keep you amused in the meantime.

- Name: Amiga Classix 3
- Publisher: e.p.i.c / Darkage
- Price: Around £16
- Contact: www.epic-interactive.com

Amiga Classix 3

Classic Amiga Gaming - for Amiga, Macintosh or PC.

Amiga Classix 3 is a compilation of over a hundred "classic" Amiga titles, ready to run on your Amiga, or via the UAE emulator on Macintosh or Windows (95,98 or ME) platforms.

If you have a real Amiga, using this disc couldn't be any simpler. You just stick it in your CD-ROM drive, open the "Amiga" drawer and look for something you want to play. Most of the games come with hard drive loaders, although some may require copying to floppies. There are also a few cracked games in here - some people frown upon using cracked versions in compilations, but it's not uncommon for the cracked version to be the only useable version available.

Emulation installation

Macintosh users will find a "Mac" drawer on the CD. They need only copy the directory to their hard drive and activate the UAE icon within. For Windows users an installer script will be launched by the CD autostart function, which installs UAE and a hardfile to your computer. A launcher app allows you to boot into a basic Workbench (licensed ROM images are supplied on the CD) set up for A500 or for A1200 games, with a single virtual hard drive with the games for those platforms available for you to launch them from Workbench. There are also specific UAE configuration files for those games which need to be "run from floppy" to start those games, and a quick launch for XTR racing - presumably Darkage's favourite game from this collection!



Although this interface is nice and easy, it does seem to miss a trick or two. If you have UAE already installed you should have the option of utilising that, but you don't - a particular shame given that the version supplied on the CD is the non-JIT version, and is significantly slower than the latest release, if a little more stable. That's not really any problem because you can always chose to mount your PC drives in your current UAE installation, and access the games direct from the CD. In fact I found this rather convenient, as some of the games that are supposedly "disk games" actually appear on the CD with hard drive loaders and can be loaded from the Workbench. One of the star games of the collection, Lure of the Temptress, benefits significantly from this - it ran rather poorly from the launcher, but very well from my own install of WinUAE-JIT.

> "...there are a number of genuine top grade classics."

Classic gaming

The games themselves are a very mixed bunch. You'll no doubt have a fun few hours wading through the weaker oddments to have a quick laugh, reminisce or scream. You may find a few that just guru for you - I did. There are, however, a number of genuine top grade classics. Adventure game fans will be particularly happy to find Beneath a Steel Sky, Sixth Sense Investigations and Lure of the Temptress. Driving game fans have XTR to play with while shoot 'em up

ALL THOSE GAMES IN FULL

A Break in Duo
Amega Race
Ball Master
Battle Cars
Battle Duel
Battle Othello
Battle Ships
Behind the Iron Gate
Beneath a Steel Sky
Black Sect
Blade
Bloog
Boppin
Bubble Stones 2
Bug Splat
Chaos
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Crossfire
Crystal Dragon
Death is on the way
Der Seelenturm
Der Trainer
Dr.Who
Duck Dodgers
Embryo
Epsilon 9
Evil
Experiment
Explosive Chaos
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Fatman
Formula 1 Manager
Frogger
G.Nius
Galactic
Go Moku
Guess Stress
Hang Mister
High Octane
Hit Puzzle
Hit Tiles 2 Special Edition
Hyperion
In the Dead of Night
Kid Pool
Kikstart
Legion
Lethal Formula
Llamatron
Logic
Lord of Alcandria 3
Lure of the Temptress
Mahjong
Maupiti Island
Mega Motion
Megaball 4
Memory 95
Metagalactic Llamas
Microbes
Mine Seeker
Monster Mind
Monty the Wolf
Mortville Manor
Nanofly
Nukes R Us
Obsession Pinball
Ooze
Outzone
Paws'n'Claws
Pharaohs Curse
Poing 5
Pork A Pork
Pure Brain
Q-Bic
R3
Rags
Rattlesnake
Realm of Maiyessae



"...a lot of fun to be had trying out games you more than likely forgot about years ago..."

fans can get Metagalactic with their Llamas. There's even an HTML directory with screenshots to help you find your way around this sizeable collection.

Amiga Classix is, as the name would suggest, a distinctly retro gaming experience. There are a few newer titles, even those are mostly old fashioned in look. In truth, most of the games are hardly what you'd call classics, but there's a lot of fun to be had trying out games you more than likely forgot about years ago - in some cases you'll find yourself wondering what you ever saw in them, in other cases you'll find yourself wondering why you ever stopped playing.

Andrew Korn A

Revenge of the Mutant Camels
Risk
Rome
Shoot Out 2
Shuffle 3
Simon 2001
Sixth Sense Investigations
Snack Man
Space Vaders
Spaceball 2000
Speed Break
Spider
Starbase 13
Stones
Strateg
Super Drive
Super Obliteration
Tactical Manager
Tactical Manager 2
Tanglewood
The Lost Prince
The Plubz
The Race
Toadies
Total Chaos City 2
Tower of Souls
Transplant
Tritus
Underwater Capers
Uermone 2
Virtual Karting 2
Uroom
Wheelspin
Wire Chaos
Xtreme Racing
Yagg
Zarathrusta
Ziriax
Zut Alors 2

Amiga Classix 3

SYSTEM: Amiga with AGA & 2MB RAM; or a PowerPC Mac with OS7.5.2+; or Win 95/98/ME PC 200MHz+ with 32MB RAM.

SUMMARY: A mixed collection of some very good games, with emulation for Mac and Windows ready to go.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

InterActive

Address your letters to:
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14 Victoria Road,
Bournemouth BH1 4RR
Or e-mail: **interactive@amigactive.com**

Excitable, suspicious or just slightly mad... that's us! As for our readers, we'll let them speak for themselves...



Make a fuss?

Dear Amiga Active,

I was just reading the "letters to the editor" in AA23 and saw a letter from an ex-Amiga user. While looking for another magazine, he stumbled over Amiga Active and after having a look inside he instantly wanted a new Amiga.

This made me think about other ex-Amiga users out there who would at least be inquisitive about a new Amiga coming out, and also the big countdown to the AmigaOne. The issue of Amiga Active that carries a review of the AmigaOne will be a very special one, and I would like to know if you will be having a special front cover for it to attract these and others to the new Amiga world.

The front covers of AA have been very different to other computer mags in the shops, and I think these could be used to announce to the world that there is finally a new Amiga out there. This may get more of those ex-Amiga users back - and maybe others who just want to try something different from a PC.

Having said all that, is the AmigaOne actually the full finished product? Will it do more harm than good to make a fuss over the AmigaOne now, or will it be better to wait for the next version of AmigaOS when there is USB and a A1200 motherboard is not required for it to work?

Darren Griffiths

The question is not so much about the AmigaOne hardware as the Amiga OS that it runs - the first version (OS4.0) will retain backwards hardware dependence, requiring an old motherboard. Later versions will work without the A1200 motherboard. You're probably right that the AmigaOne won't really be able to attract much outside attention until it is entirely free of legacy hardware - but that shouldn't take too long.

We haven't yet decided what we'll do for the cover of the issue where we review the AmigaOne. You might think that the release of a new Amiga after all these years is something any Amiga magazine should have prepared for years ago, that we'd have some jaw-dropping cover kept somewhere in liquid nitrogen ready for judgement day, but we don't. We'll do our best to come up with something special, but not until the time comes. We just don't want to jinx it!

Backdrop out

Bonjour,

I really love the Workbench backdrop you've used in issues 22 and 23. In issue 22 you can find it on pages 5 and 42. In issue 23, it's on page 14. Pleaaaaase, send me this backdrop!

Vincent

PS: Amiga Active is a very good magazine, but it is written in English!

The backdrop image we used was taken from www.earthshots.com. Unfortunately, the site has closed down now (temporarily, we hope), but could be back online by the time you read this. As for your comment about the magazine's native tongue, *Amiga Active* is only this good *because* it is written in English. I doubt any of our freelancers would be content with penning their articles in French, although if there's several hundred thousand French Amiga users out there who disagree, we could be persuaded to learn!

"Having said that, is the AmigaOne actually the full finished product?"

Ignore me please!

Dear AA,

I filled out one of your online surveys and said that you should offer discounts on long subscriptions. I was then looking round your site and found out that you already offer this. I now feel like a bit of a fool and hope that you ignored my comments!

Lewis Balfour

No need to feel like a bit of a fool - it was your suggestion that lead us to making this offer in the first place. Our publisher Mark was playing around with the office network again, and managed to produce a tachyon resonance transmission line in the Ethernet cabling, which had the effect of shunting your survey form back in time some months.

While we were naturally puzzled at the time to get an answer to a survey we had not put up yet on a web site that did not exist for a magazine we hadn't published, we were happy to implement your suggestion!

What about PCI?

Dear AA,

Is it possible to do a feature on the current PPC accelerator cards that are available or will be available soon? I'm interested in getting one to go with either the Mediator or G-Rex PCI busboards.

I would be grateful for this, as it would then allay any confusion that I have! Many thanks and keep up the good work.

Desmond Percy

"There's really nothing for us to write about..."

There's really nothing for us to write about. The old phase5 dual-processor PowerUp boards are rare as monkey eggs, and none of the other things promised have arrived yet. Elbox have said that they will be at World of Amiga SouthEast at the start of November with a SharkPPC card on show, so we should be seeing some of the new PowerPC hardware pretty soon. Rest assured we'll take a good look at it when we get it.

Pre-ordering the only way?

Dear Amiga Active,

With the developments on the AmigaOne project, I can't help feeling lucky to see the second generation of the Amiga taking place! After all, we've been waiting so many years for something to happen, and it finally is!

But it makes me wonder - looking back at Amiga history, think about the support of big software houses. Most of them are gone.

I know that Fleecy and the gang are doing the utmost in closing some contracts with software houses for supporting the AmigaONE, but we could also support the software houses ourselves for this too.

I'll explain: The software houses announce "We'll develop software for the AmigaONE when it shows up." Fair enough, but they could also pre-announce some in-progress titles to show that they are actually DOING something, perhaps show some screenshots, or make small limited demos made to run on our classic Amigas to show what they are planning. And my suggestion: The pre-order section! Pre-ordering is by now the only way to get the software houses to trust the Amiga community again.

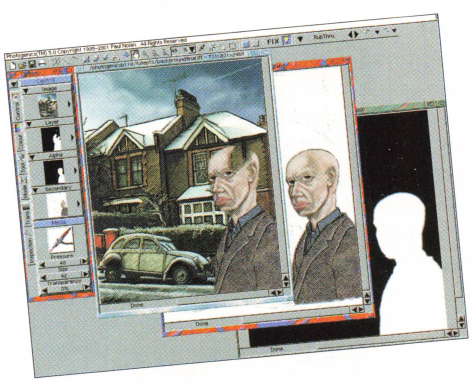
Suppose we all have our AmigaOnes ready and blasting, wasting all this hardware by running only shareware or public domain (as we have got used to) with none of the big software houses with us?

All we need for the start are the basics: new efficient word processors, 3D rendering stuff, some office help utilities, DTP packages (maybe a powered Pagestream version) and powerful graphics packages to take advantage the new graphics capabilities the AmigaONE will offer.

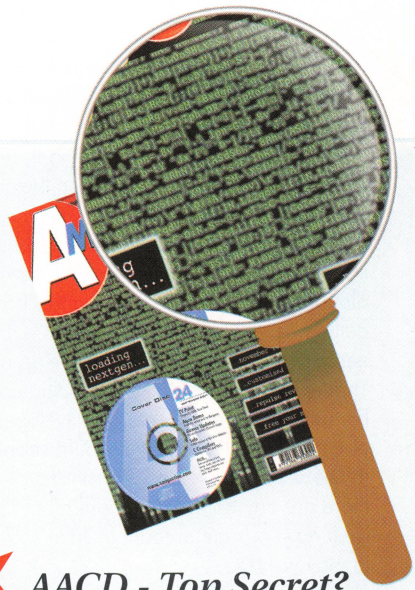
If software houses try to do this and start making pre-ordering stuff then we will support them if we want to have a new Amiga after all! That's very certain. Personally I would embrace their effort and, I believe, so would many other Amiga users world-wide.

Philip Vlahostamatis

It's a nice idea, but the truth is that not all Amiga users are as eager or as trusting as you. Many companies who have left the Amiga market tried to appeal directly to the punters in various ways and were invariably disappointed.



Above: We only need a few basics for the AmigaOne to take off. A decent graphics package, office suite, DTP, 3D...



AACD - Top Secret?

Leo den Hollander contacted us about a problem he had with the coverdisc on a recent issue. This in itself is not so hugely unusual - a few people have problems with our coverdiscs each month - it's only to be expected. However, this Leo's problem was an odd one - the CD that he received was not in fact an AACD at all...

"For your interest,"* he tells us, *"I was able to get into the disc using a PDF reader. The title of the CD is UDTeur2001-Conf.proceedings-CD."

UDT, it seems, stands for Undersea Defence Technology - the CD being the proceedings of some conference on the subject in PDF form, apparently.

Leo continues, *"I hope the SAS do not come over and bust my door down. I also hope that you are not forced into selling defence secrets to keep the Amiga Active magazine going. Come to think of it, what is that foreign man hanging around outside for? If I get a good price I go you halves."*

We can only assume that somewhere along the line the wrong CD got stacked in the wrong pile. Did anyone else get any defence secrets? We haven't heard from any other readers who have received secret documents instead of their coverdisc, but you never know. Spies take note, we've got a big stack of back issues that might interest you - you might get lucky!

The problem is that we are in a vicious circle. Users have grown cynical and want to see the developers invest in the platform before they are willing to invest in it, and the developers are reluctant because they don't see users investing.

Your point about the basics is an important one. Users will give the new platform a try if they see enough to be getting on with, and hopefully that will encourage the developers to develop more. That's the only way out of the vicious circle. Fortunately there are enough developers already dedicated that we should soon start to see see all those basics appearing - and if there are any holes to fill, remember that we'll have a huge amount of Java software to play with too.

Fresh air and cheap chips

Dear AA,

What a breath of fresh air your magazine is. Compared to other computer titles on the newsagent shelves, yours stands out as one of the best (on any platform). But the reason I write is to simply suggest a tutorial series, in programming. Yep, I know its all been done before, but there is a real shortage of source/tutorials covering generic graphics. Maybe over the course of time you could teach us the basics of game writing, a simple Pacman game for example.

You never know, as a result of this tutorial a loyal Amigan might end up writing a killer game/app for the next gen. Alright, that's a bit far fetched. But I believe it would be of more use/interest than endless features of emulation or PC sharing.

As far as PCs go, I believe it essential that AmigaDE runs on cheap-as-chips x86 hardware. General consumers aren't interested in expensive specialist hardware when they can pick up industry standard components for a third of the price. If people were to install a fabulous OS like OS5.0 will be according to the claims, and compare it to the Windoze environment they were running previously, Microsoft would be exposed for what we already know that it is.

"...Microsoft would be exposed for what we already know it is."



As I'm already mailing you, I feel I should agree with the August Rant&Rave that dealers should not deceive people about the availability of hardware. If something is in stock, in today's age of electronic monetary transfer, there is absolutely no excuse for getting the product delivered within 7 days (Royal Mail's 2nd class guarantee). Personally I don't think there's an excuse for it to take longer than a day, but that is just the opinion of a humble loyal Amigan. Thanks for the fresh air!

Lee Procter

We have a couple of tutorials in the works that go in the direction you are suggesting, one of which should be appearing very shortly. x86 has been much discussed as an Amiga platform, and certainly it would have major convenience benefits to the desktop user, but don't forget that it's not the only path to cheap performance. If you want an example of just what can be provided at the cheaper end of the market, take a look at what Nintendo are doing with a lowish end PPC chip in their new Gamecube console.

"General consumers aren't interested in expensive specialist hardware..."

Calm down, man!

"...love to see more 3D games for AmigaOne and OS4.0 PPC, just to have something to really use on this new AmigaOne while waiting for 4.2 and AmigaDE - then people can concentrate on the VP code, the heart of AmigaDE. But for now, concentrate on PPC!"

and...

"ATI has something Matrox doesn't have, and Matrox has something ATI doesn't have. Together, they would be a world-beater! Just think about it. This could really change everything, for both ATI and Matrox! It's just my suggestion..."

and...

"Could be wonderful to watch DVD-movies already on OS4.0 on the new Matrox G550-graphic card at light-speed and full-quality, full-screen display! WOW!"

Helge Kvalheim, Norway

Helge was so excited by having his letter printed in a recent *Amiga Active* that he's been mailing us with every idea he has. We're curious to find out whether he gets so excited from having excerpts from three more letters printed in this issue that he'll explode. We await further contact with trepidation.

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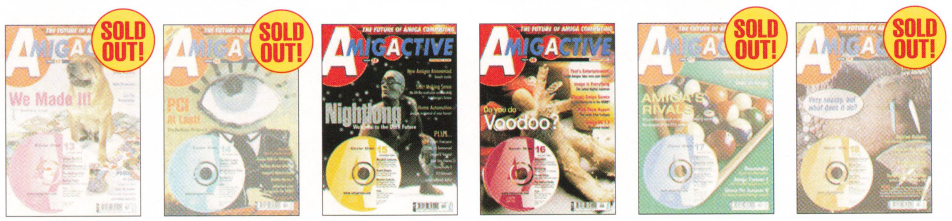

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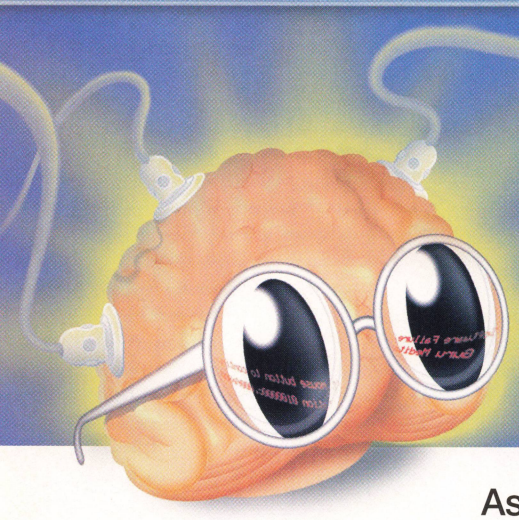


ASK THE GURU

As he doesn't have ears, the Guru's glasses keep falling off, so when you send in your questions, please use block caps!

Not getting baud are we?



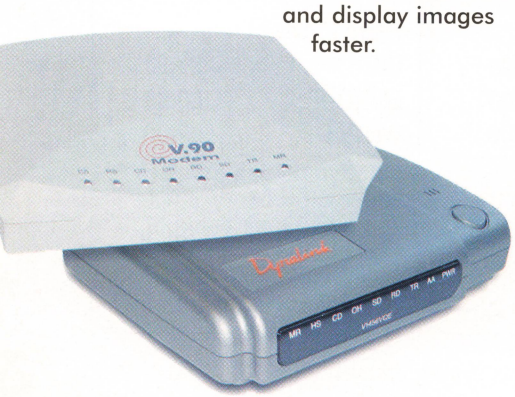
Dear Guru,

AA23's modem review reads: "All modems were connected to the computer at 115,200 - none of them would communicate with the IOBlix at 230,400..."

My modem (a Mod. Technologies Superhighway 56k/Flex) won't communicate with Miami at rates faster than this either. The IOBlix 1200S manual clearly says it is the fastest serial port around, capable of 460kbd. So tell me: why are we splashing out on faster serial ports when modems seem content with slower ones? Please enlighten me...

Gareth Kempster

The IOBlix is capable of working at 460,000 baud, but the modem is not - as is the case for most modems. The standard serial port can usually only manage 57,600 baud, and then only if you have a graphics card or less than 128 colours on an AGA screen. This is due to the serial port and the display competing for access to chip memory. A serial card running at 115,200 gives faster transfers with a smaller load on the system. Less CPU load means that, for example, your browser can decode and display images faster.



Enlightwaven me please!



Hi Guru,

I have Lightwave running in my PC, unfortunately the files are in Amiga format and I cannot use them with the rest of my software. Is there any software to convert from iff format to a PC format like gif or jpg?

Sergio Alberto Ruiz

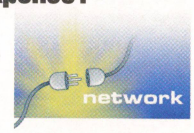
The PC version of Lightwave should be able to use .iff images from projects begun on the Amiga with no problems. This works with a Lightwave version 5.5 under Windows NT.

If you are talking about the files that Lightwave outputs, this can be set in the Render panel. Look for a pop-up menu labelled "RGB Image Format". Here you can select .JPG or almost any other known image format.

The quickest way to convert existing images with a PC would be to use the batch system in Photoshop. I can also recommend Graphics Workshop (GWS) for the PC, available for DOS and Windows. To perform the conversion on the Amiga, you could use the commercial programs AdPro, Photogenics, ArtEffect or fxPaint; or gfxcon from Aminet, also on this month's coverdisc in the AACD/Magazine/Guru drawer.

"So tell me: why are we splashing out on faster serial ports...?"

SCSI without the expense?



Dear Guru,

Up until recently, I have been a happy user of a WarpEngine accelerator board, especially with the onboard SCSI-2 controller. Attached to this controller I had a 9GB SCSI-2 hard drive, a Toshiba 32x SCSI-2 CD-ROM drive and a Yamaha 8824 SCSI CD-RW drive (both internal units).

Now I have upgraded to a CyberStorm Mk.III accelerator and I am having problems connecting my existing SCSI kit to the onboard UltraSCSI connector. What adapters do I need to connect everything together? I am guessing the following SCSI cable layout...

A 68pin SCSI cable, with 6 internal 68 pin connections, like so:

1) Active 68 pin Terminator
2) The CyberStorm UltraSCSI controller
3) The SCSI-2 HDD with 68-50 adapter (with the unused 8 bits terminated)
4) The Toshiba 32x CD-ROM drive (with the 68-50 pin adapter and unused 8 bits terminated)
5) The Yamaha 8824 SCSI CD-RW drive (adapter and unused 8 bits terminated)
6) Active 68 pin Terminator

Is this configuration correct? (sure is expensive!) If not, could you offer your opinion on the correct way in which to set-up the cabling and, if possible, recommend a supplier of the necessary items I require.

Steve Willmott

The setup is correct, though there is also a cheaper method:

1) Active UW Terminator
2) UW Controller
3) Adaptor from UW SCSI to Ultra ("normal") SCSI-2
4) Your SCSI units

5) Active SCSI-2 Terminator

Adaptors to convert from Ultra Wide to plain Ultra SCSI are widely available. The advantage of this setup is that you only need a short piece of the expensive Ultra Wide cable and only one converter, rather than one for every SCSI unit. Some people might argue that having different terminators on either side isn't very 'clean', but I can confirm that it works fine.

Repairable, or a desparate failure?



Hi Guru. Greetings from South Africa!

While writing from a floppy to my hard drive, there was a power failure and from there on the machine would not boot. I thought that maybe the HD had packed up and ordered a new one from the Eyetech. This was pre-formatted and pre-loaded with Workbench, but after installation the machine would still not boot.

I then stripped the machine down expecting to get the animated boot screen, but nothing! I have also tried loading the Workbench installation disks in the usual way but get no joy. Do you think my Amiga is repairable? What can I do?

Arthur Marshall

Well, as you say the power failure occurred when writing from a floppy to your hard disk, the worst thing that could have resulted is an invalidated hard drive. If this is the case, your machine would still try to boot - so I'll put this down as a coincidence.

The first thing that needs to be done is to determine if the power supply is actually at fault, before going any further and without complicating the matter with anything else.

You will need to get access to a voltmeter or multimeter and set it to the appropriate DC volts range to take 5 and 12 volt readings from one of the 4 pin power connectors. Insert the black probe into one of the two middle holes, insert the red probe into one of the outer holes, measure the voltage, put the red probe into the other side and measure the voltage again.

You must have 5 and 12 volts respectively (the tolerance is 10 percent). This means that you should read between 11.4v and 12.6v for the 12 volt rail; and between 4.75v and 5.25v for the 5 volt rail. If these (especially the 5 volt rail) are out of tolerance you will not have any joy.

If the voltages are okay, you have experienced some other hardware failure that will require further investigation. It would also be a good time to check the NiCad clock battery (on the left side of the motherboard next to the RAM chips) to see if it's leaking. Also, the A4000 will not boot or get to the animated boot screen if the floppy drive connector is partially unplugged or reversed. Unplug the floppy data cable entirely to discount a failed floppy drive as the cause.

Finally, note that the SIMMs in the 4000D are notorious for having weak holding clips and can just unclip themselves, which will also prevent booting. Ensure the clips are holding all the SIMMs in properly and insert small pieces of a match stick in the gap between the holding clips and the body of the simm socket to ensure they stay locked in.

When arguments turn bad!



Dear Guru,

I have an Amiga 4000/60. I recently upgraded from OS3.1 to 3.9. My biggest problem has been with the startup sequence - I still get an annoying window that says "Bad Arguments". I had a look at both my startups and I can't see anything that I can think can cause this. What could be wrong?

Also, I can't seem to get your CD to work properly: I can browse but cannot load about 90 percent of the suff from CD. I need to copy it to hard disk then change some settings in the icon to get it to work!

Andre Van Wyk

To find out what's wrong when booting, add the line:

```
set echo on
```

to the top of your Startup-Sequence. This will output every command to the shell before executing it, so you can see what is causing the error. Once you know, run the offending command from a shell with "?" (without quotes) as the only argument, to see what arguments it expects to be run with. Then compare this with what you actually have in your Startup-Sequence or User-Startup.

As for the problems you are having with our coverdiscs, it sounds like you haven't run the Welcome icon, which you should do this at least once for each new CD!

The Guru



Lovely Guru will sort out the silicon



Sloppy software? Bug the Guru!



Networking & art of Zen explained



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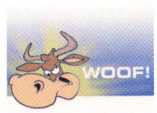

Say WHAT? You must be bonkers!

FEELING BLUE?
ASK GURU!

If you have any technical problems, tips you'd like to pass on, or requests for in-depth coverage of a particular problem, please send them to:

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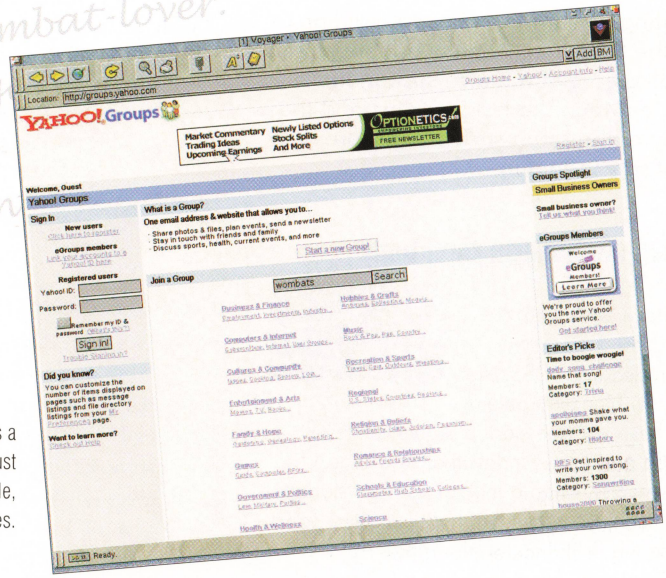
Bournemouth, Dorset, BH1 4RR

Guru's personal e-mail mailbox:
guru@amigactive.com

Let your fingers do the talking.

Feeling lonely? You should get out more... or set up your own mailing list!



Right: Yahoo Groups offers a huge range of lists on just about every topic imaginable, and a few unimaginable ones.

Usenet has traditionally been the main forum for open discussions between people sharing common interests. Mailing lists offered a more controlled environment, with each list being under the control of its owner who could make and enforce rules of behaviour.

A mailing list has both advantages and disadvantages when compared with the anarchic nature of usenet. One of the main disadvantages of running a mailing list was that you needed a "list server" that was permanently connected to the Internet, and able to handle the traffic generated by the list. It is possible to run a mailing list from a dialup connection provided traffic is light and quick response isn't needed, but for most uses a permanently connected server is needed, something which has traditionally only been available at some cost.

This changed when the likes of ONElist and eGroups, now both absorbed into Yahoo, began to offer free list hosting. Now anyone can set up a mailing list in a couple of minutes with no technical knowledge needed to create or maintain it.

"Now anyone can set up a mailing list in a couple of minutes..."

Netiquette

Netiquette isn't really much more than the application of common sense and good manners. The "rules" of netiquette have evolved over many years. We could go into detail on why you should quote carefully and why you should place your responses below the quoted text to which you are replying, but what really matters is that these methods have been found to work best over the years, to improve what e-mail is all about: communication.

As a list subscriber to a mailing list, there is one point you should bear in mind above all others: you are a guest on the owner's list and should request his (or her) wishes. If a friend asks you not to smoke in his house, or swear in front of his children, you should respect that or leave. If not, you will probably be told to leave, or at the very least you won't be invited back. There's no reason to behave differently just because you are sitting the other side of a modem from your host.

Filtering

Any decent e-mail program has a facility to filter mails from lists, and other sources, into their own folders. If you are on any high traffic lists, this feature is indispensable. Many lists include the list name in the Subject header, enclosed in brackets (e.g. "[amigactive]"), but this is not a good item to filter on. If someone sends you a private reply to a mailing list post, without changing the subject, your filter will incorrectly put it in the list's folder.

The most reliable approach is to pick something that is put in the header of an e-mail by the list server. All mails from Yahoo lists contain a "Mailing-List:" header, so you can filter on this header containing "listname@yahoogroups.com.". Usually, you

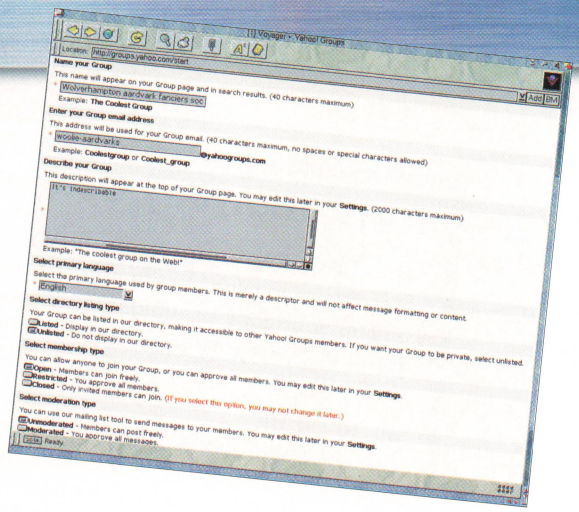
Setting up a list

There are a number of companies providing free mailing list services, although fewer than there used to be. They provide traditional e-mail access to the lists as well as web access, where they fund the list by selling adverts on the web pages. The best known is Yahoo, which provides a decent range of facilities and their web site works with Amiga browsers.

Before setting up a list, check that there isn't already a list covering your topic. Having two lists on the same topic means neither is as useful as it could be. Why dilute the efforts of the current mystic_wombats group (yes, there really is one) by setting up a competing list? Check various list servers, not just Yahoo, and try a search at www.google.com in case a suitable list is hosted elsewhere.

Once you've decided on a list name, click the 'Create List' link on the Yahoo home page. You'll need to have a Yahoo ID and be signed in. If not, you'll be invited to do this now. Fill out the form, including a description of the group that will be shown on the group's home page. The type of group to be 'open', where any member can post; 'moderated', where all posts must be approved by you; or 'announce', where only you can post. The type of group you choose to create depends on what you need it for. For example, a club could have two groups, one for general discussion and one for the organisers to send out announcements.

There is an option to hide a group from searches and listings. Use this and the option to only allow subscription by invitation and you can have a private discussion area that no-one can snoop on (in theory at least). The last stage of creating a group lets you subscribe people automatically (use this feature with care) or send out invitations.



Above: Setting up a list with Yahoo is easy - fill out a form and click a few buttons - but think about the list before you start!

> **"Why dilute the efforts of the current mystic_wombats group...?"**

Admin and rules

Running a mailing list used to involve some work, particularly dealing with bounced mails when people change e-mail addresses without telling you. Services like Yahoo make it much easier, taking care of much of the administive donkey work in the background. The only admin task you'll need to worry about is moderating the list. That is, making sure people stick within the rules and, removing people if necessary.

Your list rules shouldn't be too heavy, rather just a few guidelines as to what is and is not acceptable. If you make it too much like going back to school, people won't want to know. You could add your list of guidelines to the message that is sent out to every new subscriber or post a message to the group at regular intervals. Some lists use this feature to regularly post the list rules, but it can seem a bit heavy-handed. Instead, you may consider using this option to post a FAQ - a list of Frequently Asked Questions - which should save members of your group from asking the same old questions repeatedly.

Neil Bothwick

Where to go

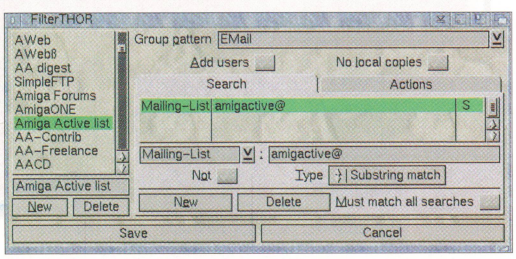
Here are some of the organisations providing mailing list services:

Yahoo Groups:
http://groups.yahoo.com
BigList (commercial):
http://www.biglist.com/price/
(commercial) Coollist:
http://www.coollist.com/
Topica:
http://www.topica.com
MLists:
http://www.mlists.com/

Note: Some people have difficulties logging in to Yahoo Groups using Amiga browsers. For instance, AWeb redisplays the login page after you have logged in, making it look as though your login has failed. Hit reload and everything should be OK. There have also been reports of cookie related problems: if you experience this you could try the old UK site at www.egroups.co.uk

can filter on just "listname@", so your filters won't stop working if Yahoo changes their name. Other list servers add similar headers. Majordomo, for example, adds a Sender: header containing "owner-listname@server.address". Listar also adds a Sender header.

Below: All decent mail programs let you filter mails from lists into their own folders.



Roll Your Own

If you have an always-on Internet connection, or it doesn't matter if mails aren't delivered immediately, you may want to try running your own list server. There are a number of reasons why you may want to do this, although the most common is probably "because you can".

A quick search of Aminet reveals several options, some of which you'll find on this month's CD. You could possibly run Majordomo, the de facto standard list server, as it is written in Perl - but Perl scripts run slowly on the Amiga. There is also a port of one of the popular Unix/Linux servers, Qmail. None of these are particularly easy to set up, however.

If all you want is a quick way to exchange mails with like-minded friends, one of the list hosting options like Yahoo would probably suit you best. But if you want to learn more about how all this stuff works, go the whole hog and install your own list server.

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Editor: David Stroud
Consulting Editor: Andrew Korn
Art Editor: Steve Crabb
New Media Editor: Neil Bothwick
Contributors: Francis Charig, Don Cox, Steve Folberg, Steffen Haeuser, Colin Wenzel, Mark Wilson

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General discussion list for our readers:
http://groups.yahoo.com/group/amigactive

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AATV Thursday October 25th

09.00 Good Morning Newsagents
Morning magazine program full of fresh ideas for buying your copy of *Amiga Active* nice and early if you don't have a subscription. Presented by Dale Winton with special guest Gary Bushell.

09.30 CD UK
Light hearted drama series. In this episode, Tom discovers his coverdisc is scratched and complains to everyone on his favourite magazine's mailing list that it won't work in his PC. Someone steps in with some bold advice about where he can shove his PC and chaos ensues. (Repeated from last month).

10.00 News
The latest news from the Amiga world presented by David Stroud and Andrew Korn. Followed by Weather.

10.30 Change That!
DIY program in which Steve asks his Editor to cut some text to fit, with the response, "Do It Yourself".

11:00 What's on the Elbox?
After waiting far too long for PCI soundcard and TV tuner card drivers, an *Amiga Active* reviewer uncovers the untold joys of sound and vision through his Mediator. Subtitled.

12:00 FILM Payback 2
Action-packed thriller sequel in which a single man crime-wave sweeps across a number of unfortunate cities. Featuring stunning 3D computer-generated effects and a storyline with more twists than a Chubby Checker reunion party, this film will have you on the edge of your seat from start to finish! Starring James Daniels. Edited for bad language and contains scenes of a violent nature. ★★★★

Please refer to AA26 for afternoon listings.

All sorts of information about the magazine can be found on our web site, at www.amigactive.com

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Jason Compton, Issue 2

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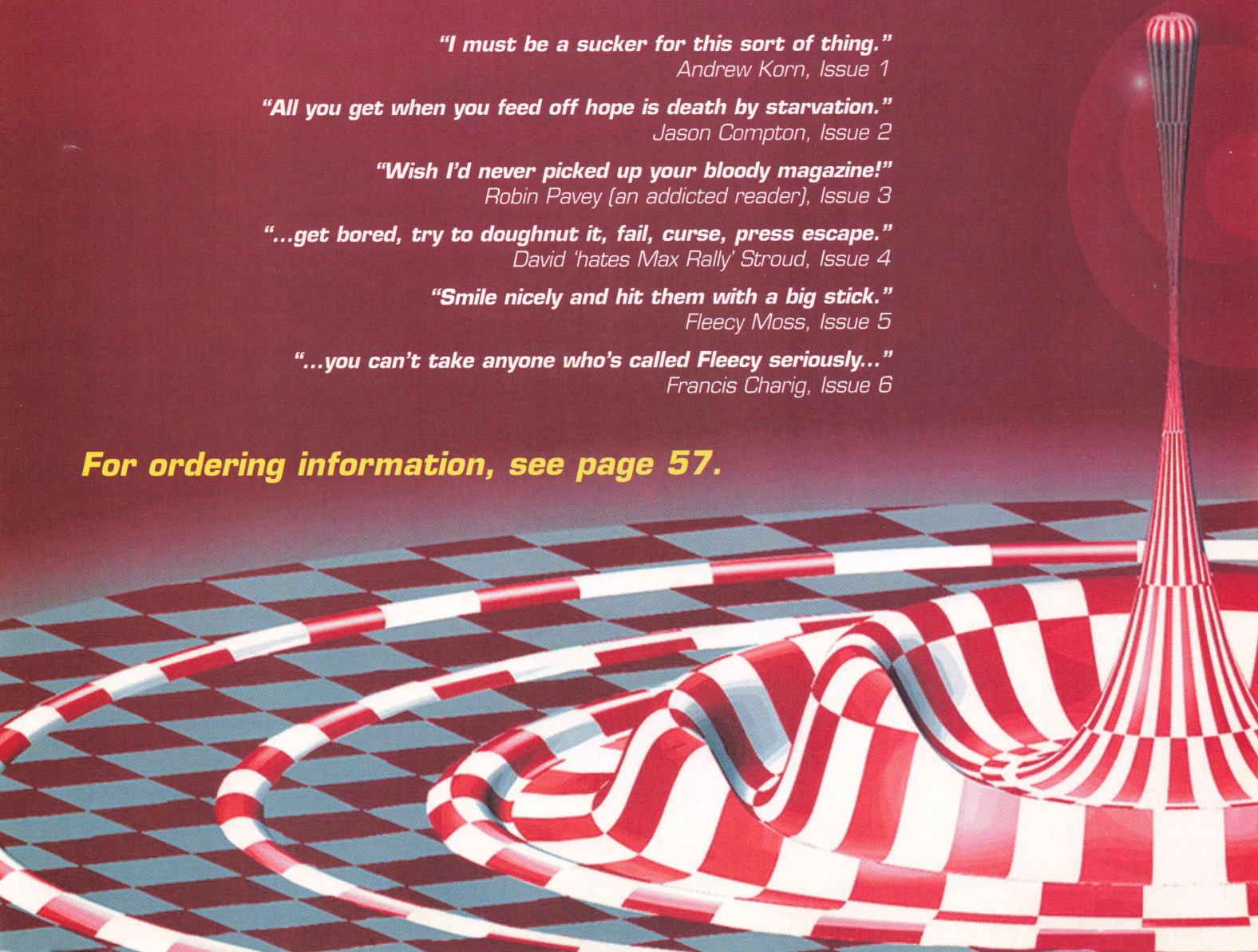
"...get bored, try to doughnut it, fail, curse, press escape."
David 'hates Max Rally' Stroud, Issue 4

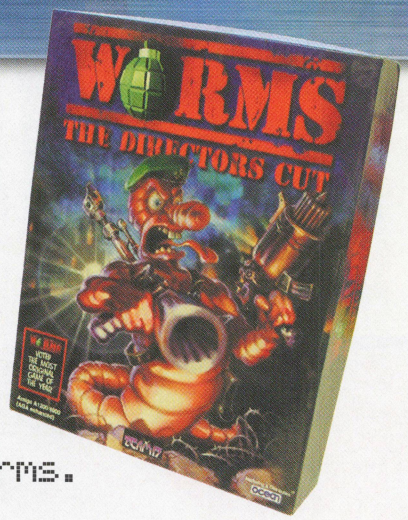
"Smile nicely and hit them with a big stick."
Fleecy Moss, Issue 5

"...you can't take anyone who's called Fleecy seriously..."
Francis Charig, Issue 6

For ordering information, see page 57.



Scary monsters, super frogs.



This month we picked on Martyn Brown, founder of Team 17, and a man of many Worms.

In 1988 Martyn Brown founded an Amiga PD library called 17bit ("That bit better"), and a couple of years later turned it into Team 17. They made their names publishing titles such as the awesomely atmospheric Alien Breed series, the awesomely funny Worms series and the awesomely underrated Superfrog.

Team 17 were one of the last big publishers to leave the Amiga market. Their last Amiga title was Alien Breed 3DIISE, a 3D shooter that was a little too high-end for the time, resulting in depressingly low sales. If you visit www.team17.com, you'll be able to tell by the appearance of an Amiga logo on their front page (indicating the Amiga version of Worms Armageddon, being developed under license by Hyperion) that they haven't forgotten their roots.

Amiga Active: *Did you have any ambition for 17bit to develop the way it has back when it all kicked off, or did all that happen by accident?*

Martyn Brown: Not really, although I'm not so much of a power-monger, all I wanted to do was be creative and create some games. We just thought that there was a lot of Amiga talent at hand and very few really good Amiga games, so we felt we'd have a go. The people were great and it just grew from there.

We were young and there wasn't really anything more in the vision than that. It all grew fairly organically and has continued as the industry matured.

AA: *Team 17 stayed in the Amiga market longer than pretty much any other publisher. Sentimentality, or a smart business move?*

MB: A little bit of both. The Amiga market was fantastic to us and without it we wouldn't be here today. It was a wrench leaving the Amiga market since it was a market we knew well and we could self-publish, which was hugely important to us. In 1994 it was plain to see that things were winding down though.

AA: *Are you a subscriber to the "It's not as much fun as it used to be" philosophy? Is big business taking the fun and creativity out of the games industry, or is it a necessary and even inevitable change - or indeed both?*

MB: The industry doesn't permit anything like the fun we used to have, it's definately big business now and there's too much risk and money flying about. The whole scale of development has gone through the roof and it's a difficult process to manage.

That said, we've all grown up and still have plenty of fun. I wouldn't have changed much, if anything from "the good old days" - they were fantastic times for us.

AA: *Do you still keep an Amiga or run UAE for the odd bit of guilty retrogaming nostalgia?*

MB: There's an Amiga in the office (one of our senior QA guys is still Amiga-nuts) and we do have a look-see every once in a while - I was playing Superfrog just the other day!

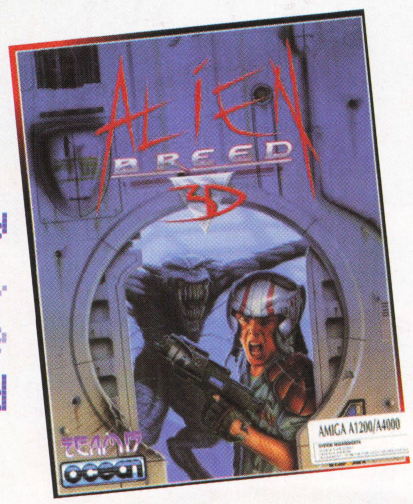
AA: *Not only are Team17 still doing new variants on Worms, with the little critters heading into the third dimension, but we hear you've got a new Alien Breed game in the pipeline too. Can you tell us anything about those?*

MB: The industry has polarised on licenses and franchises and there's not much we can do about that. We are bringing a 3D worms game out and yes, Alien Breed will be back, but there's not much I can tell you right now, sorry!

AA: *Do you pay any attention to what's happening in the Amiga world these days?*

MB: Only a passing interest. The way things work has changed now. We only produce games for the platforms that publishers ask us for, otherwise it doesn't get done. I am sceptical that the Amiga will ever have a second coming; life's not like that. But the Amiga years were brilliant and it had a terrific 10 year stint in an important period in my life, so it's no wonder people want to hang on to those times.

The industry doesn't permit anything like the fun we used to have...



Who 2 Txt Nxt?

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 at backpage@amigactive.com or write to the usual address on page 54, not forgetting to mark your envelope 'BackPage'.

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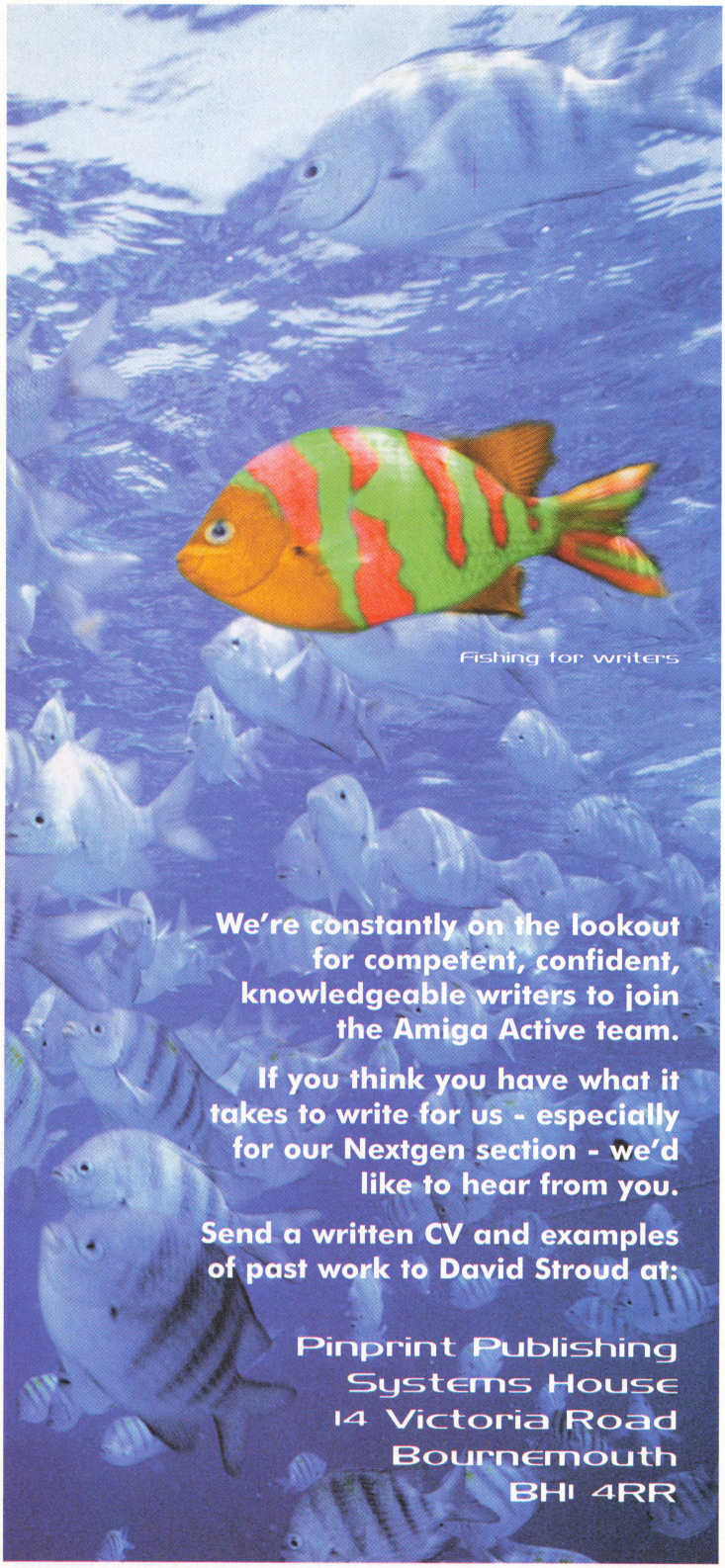

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Send a written CV and examples of past work to David Stroud at:

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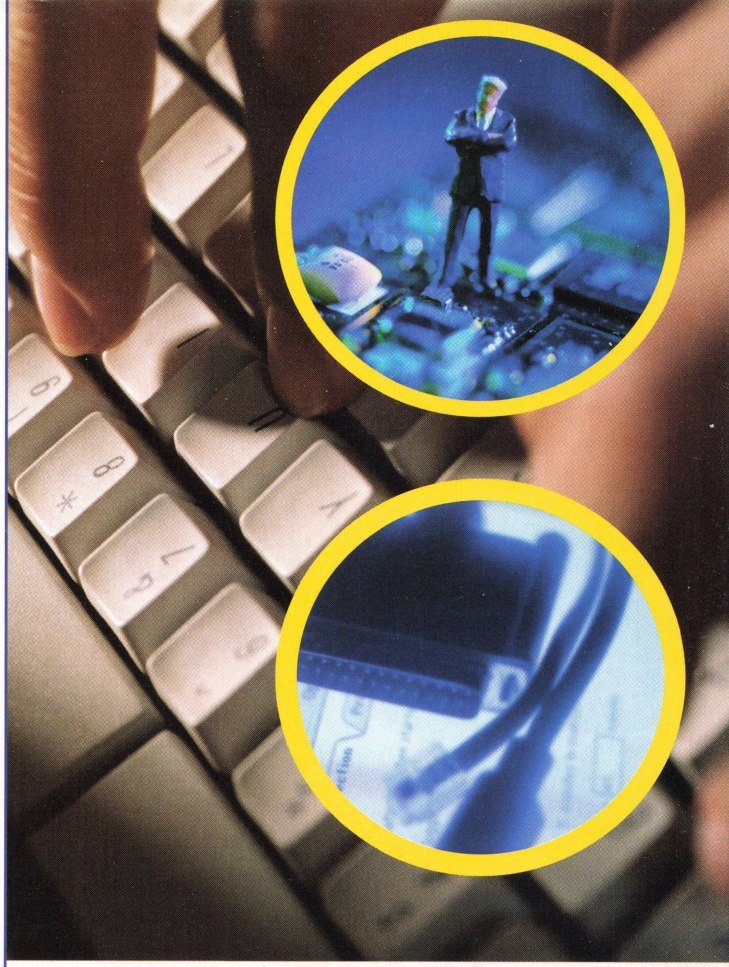

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