

THE AMIGA INFORMER

A summary of information and support for Amiga users

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WOA Insider Report From The London Show

A Closer Look At The New PPC Boards

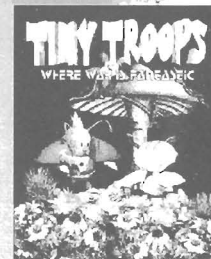
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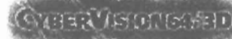
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Mission: To provide an accurate and reliable resource of information pertaining to all things Amiga®, and to connect readers with developers, their products and the Amiga community at large.

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From the Editor's Desk:



Greetings:

Finally, the long uncertain wait is over. The Amiga is firmly in the hands of a new owner, Gateway 2000.

The most positive thing Gateway said was that the Amiga as a computer platform has a future. I'm sure I joined the rest of the Amiga Community in releasing my long held breath at this news.

Some people have complained that Gateway should come out and tell us all their plans. I think this is an unrealistic request at this point. I don't want lip service, I want to hear honest, solid plans and I'm willing to wait for them as long as I know a future for the Amiga is assured.

Gateway is forming their vision of the Amiga's future by talking to the industry developers. It would be foolish of Gateway to speak before they talk to these developers. Once Gateway has gathered all input, and sets things into motion, they will let the end users know, and not before.

The Gateway news seems to have invigorated the community. End users have

stepped off the fence, and many dealers are reporting increased sales. The news revived hopes and encouraged many to continue or renew their Amiga development. Overall, most feel there are good times ahead, and so do I.

Now on to this issue. You will notice our new format with a cover and 32 pages. If you are on the Web, check out our new website at www.amigainformer.com. We are also proud to introduce our new UK correspondent, Adrian Pickering. Adrian will cover news and events from across the big pond in England, which is a hotbed of Amiga activity. As always, The Informer keeps growing and providing you with what you need to know about your favorite platform. Stay tuned because good things lay ahead.

Fletcher Haug



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We would like to thank the following Dealers for helping to distribute this issue of The Amiga Informer.

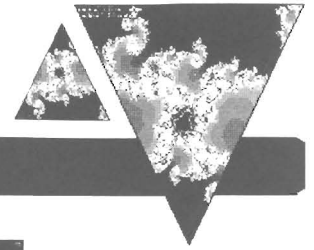
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Gateway Announces Future Plans

By Brad Webb

No one knows how many Amiga owners, developers, well-wishers and the just plain curious were waiting for the statement on May 16, but it was surely a large number. On that day, the day before the World of Amiga show in London, Gateway 2000 and the newly renamed Amiga International held a press conference to announce their vision of the Amiga's future. Ever since it became known that Gateway had an accepted bid for the assets of Amiga Technologies on March 27, the Amiga community has been looking for a roadmap to the future with Gateway's name on it. The press conference promised to be the first look at the map.

As it turned out, little explicit news was said by either company. However, Amiga International did make three broad but informative points in their statement. The plan is to support the existing Amiga community, one of the company's strongest assets, while licensing the Amiga technology and assisting the developers of new products. Specifically mentioned was the video and graphics market, the lifeblood of the Amiga.

Many observers probably would have liked more detailed plans. At this point, it is more realistic to have goals lined up and to begin developing specifics. There were no grandiose schemes announced — just solid, good business-sense mission statements. I find that reassuring. One reason business plans tend to be conservative is you survive longer that way. Petro Tyschtschenko, the head man at Amiga International, did state that operating system upgrades and new hardware platforms were being looked at. Both are clearly needed, though the operating system is in less need of upgrade than the hardware. Interestingly, no specific processor technology was mentioned. Not even the word RISC was uttered. Those who are betting on the Power PC chip could be surprised.

For their part, Gateway 2000 also made several important points. The most interesting was a quote by Jim Taylor, Senior Vice President of Global Marketing: "Every Amiga customer should know that we share their belief in this product and we believe that it has a strong role in our multimedia computing world." The most important thing for long worried Amigans to keep in mind is this — Gateway has never had any reason to say they're going to keep the computer alive, unless they intend to do just that. In fact, it would be a public relations disaster worthy of the worst of Commodore to say such a thing and do something else. Gateway 2000 doesn't make that sort of mistake.

The three key points in the Gateway statement were word for word quotes

from Petro Tyschtschenko's statement: supporting the existing Amiga community; leveraging the existing Amiga tech-

**"Through licensing and focused R&D managed by Amiga International, we plan to assist the marketplace in developing new products for the Amiga."
... Petro T.**

nology through broad licensing; and assisting in developing new products based on open standards to the home computer and video/graphics market.

There are a couple of subtleties in the announcements. First, open standards were mentioned more than once. That does not mean "whatever Microsoft says" so there's no fear of a Windows Amiga. It does mean more attention to integrating Amiga in the computing mainstream. It may also mean using more standard hardware than previously. There really is no longer a reason for the Amiga custom chipset, hard as that is for some to accept. The corollary of this is that standard hardware can be translated into lower prices, something Amiga definitely needs.

A second subtlety was in a quote by Tyschtschenko: "The Amiga market can not afford a split, we must go together into one direction." The clear implication: Phase 5 and PIOS get on board with us or be left behind. The Amiga will be licensed, but there must be only one Amiga or we all lose.

A closer look at Gateway 2000 should prove reassuring for Amigans. In the first quarter of 1997, Gateway 2000 had 8% of the total direct vendor's desktop PC market share (source: Information Week magazine, May 19). That compares to IBM's 7%, and Compaq's 13%. The company recently started trading on the

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Petro T. was mingling with everyone at WoA, giving out Amiga mice and mats. He seems to be a genuine person, eager to tell us everything, but he knows that doing so at this time may risk the future of the Amiga.

World of Amiga Show A Success

By Adrian Pickering©

The World of Amiga computer show (WoA) has always been used by attendees as an opportunity to pick up a few bargains and gossip with the like-minded, and by exhibitors as a parade for exciting new products. This year the two-day London event was no exception.

As usual, the show drew a healthy mix of people from a variety of professions and lifestyles. Pensioners, students, and professionals alike strolled through the tightly squeezed hall with the hope of swapping the contents of their pockets for, predominately, CD's and CD-ROM's. Almost all the vendors were reporting high sales of CD-ROM software and players.

As well as giving credit cards a good work out, WoA was the place to pick up gossip. Petro Tyschtschenko of Amiga International was freely mingling with people, liberally dishing out freebies and conservatively offering carefully pruned answers to non-stop quizzing. Gateway 2000 also had a representative or two lurking around the show, although they managed to maintain a degree of anonymity.

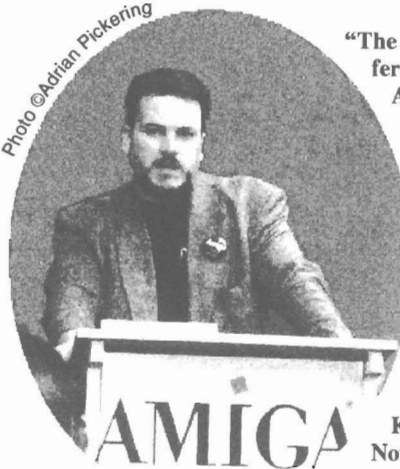
New games, applications and hardware were all present, not least of which was the mighty PowerPC version of the CyberStorm from Phase 5. Rivals PIOS were there to hype the TransAm, and HiQ demonstrated their much-publicized Siamese RTG package. Games were far from neglected. Big Red Adventure and TFX were both drawing the crowds. Traditional Amiga names too, including the latest incarnations of Wordworth, Scala and ImageFX, were all enjoying the attention and selling at discount prices.

The show was extremely well received by the droves of visitors, although attention focused mainly on third party products rather than the somewhat vague press release issued by Gateway on the preceding Friday. Despite this, it must have been reassuring for all at Amiga International to witness such a large and enthusiastic attendance in Europe for a computer with such a sketchy past. See www.homeusers.prestel.co.uk/pickering for further details.

From The Developers Conference

The Developers Conference drew a packed house with perhaps 100 or more people, including Petro T. and Gateway representatives. The most positive parts of the Conference, headed by Nova Design's Kermit Woodall, regarded the idea of greater cooperation between Amiga companies. Their was a general tone of agreement that developers should stick together, as they are competing with big names like MS, Adobe, Apple, etc., more than with each other. See www.amiga.org/developers for more info on the Amiga developers cooperation and associated mailing list information.

Photo © Adrian Pickering



"The Developers Conference, arranged by AmigaSOC, was a qualified success. We are . . . on our track towards organizing developers to work more closely together on future projects and interactions."

Kermit Woodall of Nova Design Inc.

Rumors overheard at the show:

- Workbench 4 should be available inside six months, and may contain a TCP/IP Socket, Virtual Memory and Memory Protection. The next Amigas will be RISC-based, but the Motorola PowerPC may not be the processor.
- Gateway 2000 recognizes the fierce loyalty of Amigans and this loyal user base had a great bearing on their decision to buy the Amiga.
- Representatives at WoA were very impressed at the level of understanding that Amiga users have about the platform.
- A PPC Amiga OS seems to be a priority, and Gateway wants to see Amiga OS running on both PIOS 1 and the Phase 5 A/box.

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New York Stock Exchange, announced a stock split and a stock repurchasing program. All are events completely foreign to any Amiga owners in the past. Gateway is obviously a major player in desktop computers.

In early April, Compaq came close to purchasing Gateway, but the deal came apart, reportedly over the relative rankings of executives from both firms in the proposed combined operation. In response, Compaq has launched a new effort to sell in the small business and government markets, Gateway's strength. Not to be outdone, Gateway is going after Compaq's traditional market in large corporate accounts. Gateway has actually increased its share

of those markets in the last 12 months and has new programs and computers aimed squarely at them. Industry analysts see more risk for Compaq than Gateway in these business maneuvers. Clearly, the Amiga is now owned by a company that

"The basics of success in this project is to work together with partners and to define a common path of development."

. . . Petro T.

knows how to sell and how to market. That will take some getting used to by us long term Amiga users.

On May 20, Gateway Chairman and CEO, Ted Waitt, made a speech at the PC Tech Forum in California that made PC

market vendors sit up and take notice. He stated outright that the Windows/Intel (WinTel) "duopoly" was not good for customers. In his speech he said, "We can't let the creators of this technology lead and the world follow blindly... We should not allow ourselves to be intimidated by some technology companies." He later implied that Microsoft and Intel were exactly whom he meant. He was making a point that personal computers need to be more affordable and easier to use. He seemed to indicate that the future is pointing to web browser technology as a guide for designing interfaces, among

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Phase 5 Demos Power PC Board

By Adrian Pickering©

Phase 5, a company that has inspired great hopes for the Amiga, previewed their Amiga PowerPC expansion boards at the World of Amiga Show in London. The German company previously boosted Amigas with Blizzard and CyberStorm accelerators and CyberVision graphics cards. Their products, although often reaching the market somewhat later than anticipated, have always been well received.

Their newest range of products are the CyberStormPPC and BlizzardPPC PowerUp accelerators. They employ clever hybrid technology to arm current Amigas with the newest and best PowerPC processors, as well as including original CISC 680x0 processors to retain backward compatibility. This approach means that upgrading will boost the performance of almost everything you do on your Amiga today as well as inviting a wide range of innovations in tomorrow's software products.

Phase 5 was proudly showing off a beta

version of the CyberStormPPC. In true Amiga tradition, multitasking was the order of the day; OpenGL graphics spinning and dancing merrily in one window, real-time mandelbrot fractal zooms in another. These windows, and others, could be dragged and resized without a single glitch, over a high-resolution MPEG animation, decoded in software, running as the Workbench backdrop. The board itself was visibly well engineered. There were no obvious hardware patches or extra wires jumping the board. The CyberStormPPC certainly seems to be of the high standard we now expect from Phase 5.

Phase 5 project PPC 604e cards, clocked at 150, 180 and 200 MHz, to be available for A3000 and A4000 Amigas by June, although this is probably optimistic. A1200 owners can expect the fast-SCSI II equipped 603e 175 MHz by the end of June and the 200 MHz version one month later. A tower upgrade will almost certainly be needed to house the A1200 versions, however. A2000 owners will have to wait at least until August before they can get their hands on their 604e boards.

Blizzard 175 MHz 603/030 boards for the A1200 should weigh in at about US \$480, with the top of the range 200 MHz CyberStorm 604e Zorro III board costing

about US \$1,100. Phase 5 offers a trade in plan for existing Blizzard and CyberStorm owners. All the PowerUp accelerator cards require you to purchase a 680x0 chip on top of these prices.

There is currently no benchmark data available from Phase 5 based on actual Amiga performance. Phase 5 did provide a table of estimated performance, although the gain in performance from a PowerUp board over a regular CyberStorm is unlikely to be realized until PowerPC-optimized software trickles onto the market.

A cause for concern is the speculation that Amiga International (AI) is unlikely to follow the PPC route. Phase 5 was minimizing their risk by choosing to develop for the PPC; it was a safe option because most of the investment in the development could be applied to Macintosh accelerators. If AI does unveil a new Amiga range with a different chipset, developers and power users will be torn between the two technologies and this will result in casualties.

Undoubtedly, there are people who will benefit from purchasing a PowerUp accelerator as soon as they are released. But most users would be wise to wait for the results of real-world trials.



Jay Miner Society Goes Public

By Colin Thompson

The annual changing of the Amiga guard this year has infused the community with a new vigor. Gateway 2000 has publicly stated they are open to any possibility. They feel the future of the Amiga lies in licensing the Operating System to developers. But who will set the standards for the future Amiga Operating System?

When Gateway bought the Amiga, they did not know that an effort to define these standards was already in place. Two private internet mail lists, Second Wind and ARise had been circulating for nearly a year, gathering ideas from developers for the future design of the Amiga.

Once the Gateway purchase was made public, the people behind the mail lists went public too. They announced the existence of The Jay Miner Society (JMS), an organization designed to foster an atmosphere of cooperation between Gateway and the Amiga community.

The original organizers of the JMS were Giorgio Gomelsky, Erich Keser, Steve Bowie and Skal Loret, but by no means were they the only participants. Only through the efforts of many was this endeavor brought to where it is today.

The JMS is actually an umbrella organization that sponsors two other projects, both aimed directly at coordinating the efforts of Amiga developers. The first project is to establish an Industry Council (IC). This council is composed of top Amiga developers and informed users. The goal is to establish standards that the developers and Gateway can use to define the next generation of Amigas. The second objective is called the Open Amiga Initiative (OA). It is designed to turn the Amiga OS into a so-called "shrink wrapped" environment, allowing the Amiga OS to be used on several different hardware platforms. This would be done by writing custom libraries, and layering the OS over a Hardware Abstraction Layer

(HAL). Together, the two projects are known as the ICOA.

On the Monday before the World of Amiga show in London, Fleecy had a 45 minute telephone conference call with Gateway's Steve Johns and Keith Braddocks. The Gateway Execs liked the concept of the Open Amiga. They promised to mention it in their World of Amiga news conference the following Friday, which they did. They told Fleecy to get the organization in working order, and then report back in two months.

The ICOA Web site was posted immediately. In the first week, hundreds of developers and individuals registered their support. The invitation-only ICOA mail list started up and yielded instant results. A digest of the mail list is available to the public for comment on the ICOA site and all interested should take a look at this exciting initiative. Visit The JMS at www.jms.org and The ICOA at www.znet.com/~colin/icoa/. Email Fleecy Moss at fleecy@jms.org



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other things. Amiga owners can be excused for thinking there might be a technology recently acquired by Gateway that could provide a good basis for a non-WinTel approach to easy to use, affordable computing.

Another point made by Mr. Waitt after his speech was very interesting in light of the discussion about the Amiga's hardware future. Noting that Intel is not the only chip maker in the world, Waitt expressed interest in the K6 processor by AMD. He wouldn't comment on whether Gateway would build a non-Intel PC. However, with the Amiga, Gateway already is. Whether all this ties together in Gateway's future plans only time will tell.

And what of Amiga International since the Gateway purchase? There have been some interesting changes there, beyond the change in name. There are now more employees already at work, and others due to start on June 1. The company is now organized as a US company, though operations seem likely to remain in Germany. Amiga International is also in search of a person to head product development and R&D. The sense is of a company coming out of the doldrums.

You can never know what the future will bring. However, if you look at where the Amiga now sits with its recent acquisition by Gateway, and listen to all the words coming from both companies, it's hard not to be hopeful. For the first time there's a truly strong company behind the Amiga, one that knows how to market product. It's a company that understands the PC world but is not slavishly devoted to it. Remember, Gateway got its start supporting users of the completely dead TI 99/A computer for as long as it was feasible. If the Amiga can't make it now, then there is probably nothing that could have saved it. From where I sit, the possibilities are the best Amigans could have hoped for and there's no reason the future can't be blindingly bright. ☺

"...licensing will allow the Amiga to be spread to many different embedded applications in fields such as medical solutions, simulation applications, fitness equipment, irrigation systems and kiosk terminals." ... Petro T.

IN BRIEF . . .

AHI v4, the retargetable audio standard for AmigaOS that supports most audio cards is available for free from www.lysator.liu.se/~lcs/ahi.html. A newsreader called **FFNews** is available for any Amiga using OS3.x. It uses the MUI interface and is found on Aminet as comm/news/FFNews156.lha. **Cloanto** joins the move to PowerPC with their new PPC Blitting Library for Personal Paint 7. More info at www.cloanto.com. **Powercon 97** is coming to Montreal and will gather the PPC community to show support for all PPC platforms. Details at www.moebius.qc.ca/PowerCon97/. **Nordic Global Inc.** announced **MiamiSSL**, an implementation of the "Secure Socket Layer" (SSL) standard allowing secure TCP connections. Likewise, **Voyager-NG** supports MiamiSSL. **BigDisk** from **AWSW**, removes the 4 Gb limitation of AmigaOS making it possible to use 9 Gb or larger hard drives. Visit www.acomp.hu/awsw. **clickBOOM** announced their "Conversion Wish List," located at www.clickboom.com, where users can vote for the games they want to see appear on the Amiga. **CEV** has several **Tower solutions** available for those looking to add Zorro 2 or 3 expansion to their A1200. Call 617-942-0209 or email cev@shore.net.

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An Informer Retailer

SoftLogik released PageStream v3.2b to the Amiga desk top publishing community. With this release, SoftLogik has finally exorcized most of the problems that plagued earlier releases. Version 3.2b really places PageStream (PGS) among the best DTP packages around. PGS 3.2b is the result of over five months of work and is a free patch made available to registered users of v3.2. A few of the many improvements include numerous speed improvements and interface enhancements, major speed and memory improvements to non-postscript printing, improved IFF ILUS loading and saving, and many bug fixes. Version 3.2b is a highly functional DTP package as it is, but when you add a few of the many extensions packages such as Borders, TextFX, Gary's Effects, and the TrueType Font Engine, it truly becomes a full DTP tool that matches most rivals on any platform. For more info contact: SoftLogik Publishing, 315 Consort Dr., St. Louis, MO 63011-4439; Sales: 1-800-829-8608 (314-256-9595); Fax: 314-256-7773; Email: support@softlogik.com; URL: www.softlogik.com

☛FH

Amiga software publisher and distributor GamaSoft formed a new alliance called the Dealer-Direct Network (DDN). Dealers who are selected to join the GamaSoft DNN gain special promotional benefits such as dealer incentives, sales contests, multimedia selling tools, pre-release merchandise, T-shirts, banners, posters, and other promotional goods. A uniform marketing approach and active sales program were always lacking for most Amiga products and the DDN could go a long way to changing this. Products in exclusive North American distribution by GamaSoft include Web Cruiser, New York, Voodoo 2.0, and MOca. GamaSoft also conducts direct sales of DrawStudio. Any dealer who wishes to join the DDN must make a query by emailing Production Director Ted Wallingford at twalling@mich.com with all of their contact information. GamaSoft LLC, 2644 Botsford St., Hamtramck, MI 48212; Phone: 313-365-8414

☛FH

Two new Amiga clones have been announced by England's Index Information, Ltd. Closer to being available is the "Access" model, described as a, "corporate multimedia delivery platform based on the Amiga chipset and operating system." This model is designed with a mother board small enough to fit in any standard 5 1/4 inch drive bay. It uses the economy version of the 68020 processor. The second model has the unlikely name of "InsideOut." This model is "a new generation of high-end Amiga computers" with "RISC processor performance," (a wonderfully vague term) and PCI expansion bus. Few other details are available on this model, said to be some months from availability. Details at www.cix.co.uk/~index/welcome.htm

☛BW



Long time developer Chaocity is reluctantly closing its doors as of July 1, 1997. This closing is due to both flat sales and an inability to maintain development responsibilities and normal day-to-day operations of business. Chaocity is showing its appreciation to the Amiga community by offering blowout pricing on many of their products while supplies last. Examples include VistaPro 3.05, Distant Suns CD or Floppy for US \$24.95, MakePath, TerraForm and GeoMorph for US \$14.95 and VistaLite and the CyberFlights video for US \$4.95. Other titles are available at similar pricing. Tech Support will be maintained by mail or email through the end of 1998. There is a possibility that another company could gain the rights to distribute Chaocity products, allowing for the continuation of development, but this has not yet been determined. More details at: www.chaocity.com; Email, tech@chaocity.com; or 805-925-7732 (ordering).

☛FH

Yes, it's true. NewTek has stopped all future upgrades of LightWave for the Amiga platform. That means we Amigans will not see version 5.5. The latest advances in LightWave 5.5 are not compatible with the Amiga due mainly to OpenGL and speed issues. In addition, last year's sales for Intel/Alpha versions of LightWave made up most of NewTek's total profits while Amiga LightWave sales contributed very little. As other platforms advance in power and capability, it becomes difficult to keep up with the latest 3D advances that LightWave competitors develop when drastic changes to the language and interface have to be made to accommodate the Amiga. However, Gateway 2000's plans could change NewTek's decision. They have stated that if the platform is properly upgraded by Gateway 2000 to keep up with other PC advances, they will again strongly consider LightWave on the Amiga.

This does not mean that NewTek has dropped the Amiga all together. They still intend to support the Toaster/Flyer, which generated greater than expected sales in 1996. In fact, NewTek is looking for able Amiga programmers to do Toaster/Flyer upgrade programming. Anyone with Toaster/Flyer experience and programming knowledge should contact Harold Russel, Product Manager of Flyer Development, NewTek, Inc., 1200 SW Executive Dr., Topeka, KS 66615; Email: harold@newtek.com

☛FH

Two long time Amiga developers announce upgrades to their 3D software packages. Due to the success of the recently released Imagine 5.0, Impulse Inc. has begun development on a completely new version of their 3D software package. Details and a release date of Imagine 6.0 have not been made available, but the new version will be sold for US \$100 to registered Imagine 5.0 users. See URL www.coolfun.com/amiga.html for more information on Imagine.

Good news also comes from the Nova Design camp. Aladdin 4D should be available as you read this. Nova claims that Aladdin 4D will be one of the easiest to use 3D packages around (see announcements section for details). Pricing for Aladdin is quit attractive as well. Owners of any previous version of Aladdin 4D can upgrade to the new version for just US \$99.95. Likewise, ImageFX owners will also be allowed to 'crossgrade' and get a complete Aladdin 4D for US \$99.95 as well. And to top off the Nova Design happy news, we can expect to see ImageFX 3.0 ship sometime within the year. The combination of those two programs should bring tears of joy to many Amiga artists. For more information on Nova Design, call 804-282-6528 or visit www.novadesign.com

☛FH

"Merapi" will become an important name in Amiga history if Germany's Haage & Partner have their way. That's their code name for an implementation of Sun Microsystem's Java for the Amiga. Haage & Partner began developing an Amiga Java Virtual Machine (JVM) in late 1996, looking to a release date in July or August of this year. The JVM should allow the Amiga to run dozens of Java compatible applications developed for the PC and other computers. Plans are to make the JVM available as a stand-alone product, and bundled with web browsers such as Voyager. Haage & Partner's home page is www.haage-partner.com/e.htm

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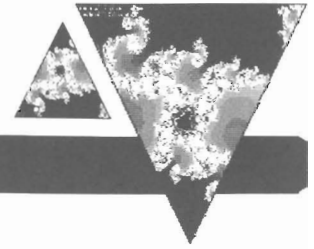
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Announcements



The descriptions and opinions stated in this column are not necessarily those of The Informer. We are not responsible for the validity of these announcements.

AWeb-II v3.0

From: AmiTriX Development

Email: sales@amitrix.com

URL: www.amitrix.com/index.html

AmiTriX announced the pending release of AWeb-II, version 3.0. This version has been totally rewritten and redesigned to include more configurable options and greater flexibility for future updates. Some of the new features of AWeb-II v3.0 are: full support for frames, table backgrounds, and more HTML features; support for server push and client pull; support for proxy authorization; internal FTP support; a public plugin interface; plugin modules; versatile cookie protection and a cookie alert requester; greatly enhanced and expanded ARexx command set; Clipboard support; configurable user buttons; configurable Image and Link popup menus; powerful hotlist manager; enhanced cachebrowser; updates to HTTP, AWebNews and HTML-Heaven; and more. MSRP is US \$45 / CAN \$60 plus \$5 shipping. Current owners of AWeb may upgrade to 3.0 for US \$20 / CAN \$27, plus shipping. Registered AWeb-II v3.0 users will receive a free update to v3.1 when it becomes available at a future date. AmiTriX Development, 5312 - 47 Street, Beaumont, Alberta, T4X 1H9 Canada.

Phone or Fax: 403-929-8459

Aladdin 4D v5

From: Nova Design

URL: www.novadesign.com

Nova Design Inc. will soon release the much anticipated Aladdin 4D version 5. The original release date of Aladdin 4D v5 was expected in winter 1996. However, because Nova decided to add new features to Aladdin, the release slipped to June of 1997. Some of the many features of A4Dv5 are: Styleguide compliant; Amigaguide help system; thumbnail load/save requesters; infinite Surface Layering; hierarchical motion and targeting; advanced motion controls;

easy to use Gaseous Objects; unlimited Wave Sources; Fountain Particle System; LightWave/Toaster compatibility; buffer sharing between Aladdin 4D and ImageFX; Spline modeling tools; Plug-In architecture; true photoreal soft and ray traced shadows; multiple level supersampling antialiasing; fastest possible rendering speeds; Animated Fog, Image Keying, and Particle Blur special effects; resolutions up to 32,000 by 32,000 pixels; support for CyberGraphx, DCTV, Toaster, Retina, OpalVision, HAM8, 24-Bit IFF and much more. Nova Design, Inc., 1910 Byrd Avenue, Suite 204, Richmond, VA 23230. Voice: 804-282-6528; Fax: 804-282-3768

AV8RPro

From: MegageM Digital Media

Email: megagem@megagem.com

URL: www.megagem.com

MegageM announced a powerful new upgrade for the original AV8R software. A partial list of the new AV8RPro features include: automated fast timeline updates; faster performance with double-buffered, smoother action of the timeline; a 25% larger on-screen EDL can be instantly saved as a text file; instant 'match frame' viewing with one mouse click; editing capability extended to modify Framestores and Flyer Still durations; direct linkage to the Flyer/Toaster screen; advanced Flyer video field-freeze, save, and load (for CG overlays and layering); instant Edit Trim buttons to modify edits by +/- 2 or 10 frames; full Amiga menus for most functions; much more ARexx support (over 30 commands); enhanced hardware edit controller functions for project navigating and editing; and more. Upgrades from AV8R are US \$100 with all new user manuals and US \$250 with Edit Controller hardware. New sales are US \$349.95 (software only) and US \$599.95 (with hardware Edit Controller). See web site for full details. MegageM, 1903 Adria Avenue, Santa Maria, CA 93454; Phone: 805-349-1104; Fax: 805-922-5003

Vulcan Products

From: Vulcan Software

Email: Paul@vul-soft.demon.co.uk

URL: http://www.vulcan.co.uk

Vulcan continues to develop quality games for the Amiga. The Final Odyssey is an elaborate adventure game in which you solve the complex puzzles and mysteries of the Minotaur's Labyrinth. This game promises logic puzzle solving, action and strategy, sophisticated weaponry, traps, enemies, quests, 3 massive worlds, hundreds of Animated frames, interactive characters, 3D stereo sound and superb lighting and reflection effects. It runs on any Amiga with 2 Mb RAM and is due out in June/July 1997.

There is also a Version 2 demo of Genetic Species which promises to be a superior Doom clone. It is available on the Vulcan website and Aminet. Minimum requires are AGA or a graphics card; 2 Mb Chip + 4 Mb Fast RAM; and a 68020 CPU. There will be a PPC version of Genetic Species, and a CD is in the works. For those owning Burnout, there are free Burnout Expansion files available on the Vulcan website or Aminet that contain 4 new arenas and 4 new cars. Finally, Vulcan has hinted at a Virtua Cop Clone for the Amiga in the near future. Vulcan House, 72 Queens Road, Buckland, Portsmouth, Hants PO2 7NA, England.

ClickBOOM PPC Support

From: clickBOOM

Email: alex@clickboom.com

URL: www.clickboom.com

ClickBOOM announced they will develop games for PowerPC (PPC) Amigas in cooperation with Phase 5 Digital Products of Germany. The first clickBOOM Power Amiga game will be Myst, followed by other games fully optimized for the PPC. ClickBOOM's decision to develop for the powerful PPC chip will allow them the freedom to convert large complicated games from other platforms to the Power Amiga. The exact time-line of clickBOOM Power Amiga

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Announcements

con't from page 10

releases is still unknown. However, they will release several 680x0/PPC titles prior to going 100% PowerPC.

Games Master System (GMS) v0.6B

From: Paul Manias

Email: paul@ethos.co.nz

The Games Master System is a developers kit aimed at enhancing the functionality of the Amiga OS, with emphasis on games programming. It is based on the Amiga shared library standard, so it will work with any programming language. The system can be ported to other platforms and run without recompilation, if the CPU's match. GMS features include: fast blitter functions, including CPU assisted blitting; full sprite support; in-built proportional fading functions; sound support; support for raster/copperlists; external structure and object pre-processing; smart saving/loading; preference program; and more. The system includes full resource tracking, safe task destruction features, and a

debugger. Functions are written with garbage protection features and software based memory protection. GMS can recover from many programming errors that usually result in software failures. GMS is available on Aminet as dev/misc/gms_dev.lha

Newlook's IRC Script Collection

From: Deryk Robosson

Email: newlook@ameritech.net

URL: <http://www.geocities.com/SiliconValley/Park/5249/>

Internet Relay Chat veterans will recognize the nickname "newlook." In real life, newlook is Deryk Robosson, a prolific Amiga programmer. Deryk has written several AREXX scripts that extend the usefulness of AmIRC, the IRC program from Vaporware. Most of the scripts can be found on Aminet, but Deryk's webpage features the latest versions of the entire collection which currently include: AmIRCAskHost, AmIRCFetch, AmIRCFinger, AmIRCPing, AmIRCURLSHOW, AmIRCWhoIs, Join/Seen, Reflect, Say, Reverse, Time/Date, AutoOp, and MPEGAs.

And More . . .

Here's a short list of some of the many programs that have recently been released or that are very near release:

- Air Mail Pro - email software
- Aminet Set 4 - Aminet archive CD
- Art Effects v2.0 - paint program
- AsimCDFS v3.8 - CD file system update
- Cyclone - Modula-2 compiler
- DrawStudio v2.0 - structured drawing
- Eucalyptus v1.0 - email program
- Executive - task scheduler
- HTDS v40.10 - hypertext datatype system
- IBrowse v1.1 - web browser
- Majordome v2.0 - home protection
- MakeCD v2.1 - CD writing software
- MidiTracker v1.1 - MIDI sequencer
- PageMonster v1.0 - webpage generation
- PCTask v4.2 - 486 PC emulator
- PersonalPaint v7.1 - paint program
- Same Difference v1.01 - file comparison
- SMT v2.31 - MIDI sample player
- SoundStage Pro - digital audio board
- STFax v1.360 - fax software
- System Test Utility v8.0 - system diagnostic
- ToolManager v3.0 - WB tool organizer
- Visage v39.12 - picture viewer
- VWM v1.2 - window manager
- Web Explosion - webpage development CD
- XDVE v2.70 - animation and tiling

Many games these days are designed for PAL display, not NTSC. You can still play most of these games by simply booting in PAL mode. Hold down the left and right mouse buttons and turn on your computer. Go to Display Options and click PAL then Use. Insert your Workbench floppy disk and select Boot, and you should be ready to load and play.

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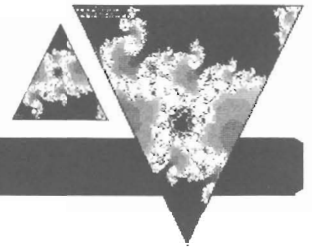
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Developments



Company Profile

MegageM Digital Media has been developing Amiga software and hardware products for nearly 10 years. They specialize in Amiga and NewTek product sales and software development. MegageM CEO, Daniel Wolf, has overseen the development of more than a dozen Amiga supportive products ranging from top-end Toaster Flyer interfaces to Fractal generation artwork compilations. All of the software programs created for Amiga are written in 100% assembly language for maximum speed and performance.

MegageM develops and supports these products:

AV8RPro: An extended user interface for the NewTek Flyer, which adds a interactive timeline and edit-decision-list working environment and extended feature set to the Flyer. AV8RPro adds things like instant Flyer video grabs, interactive audio-to-video sync, and even hardware jog-wheel and push-button controls to the Flyer.

YBT: A timeline viewing tool for either the Flyer or Video Toaster. YBT gives any Flyer or Toaster 4.1 user a way to view projects in EDL and timeline fashion.

VideoGems: A CD-ROM filled with Video Toaster effects, colorfonts, and real-world terrain 3D objects for LightWave.

FractalPro v6.1: Fractal art and animation containing Mandelbrot sets, animation sequencing features, image coloration methods, and fast rendering fractal mathematical methods.

ScapMaker v4.0: Originally a conversion package for 2D IFF images to 3D VistaPro landscape objects, now with object compositing and output/conversion to LightWave object format as well.

CellPro v.1: Experimental computer science and recreation program with high speed graphic display of cellular automata.

NeuroPro v2.0: An experimental computer science tool that graphically explores the neural-network approach to artificial intelligence and pattern-recognition technology.

BarProA and B: Bar code printing program that integrates directly into the Amiga's OS for bar code scanning into any Amiga program by wand or laser gun reader.

In addition, MegageM distributes these quality products:

AmiVR1&2- 3D: 3D viewing system developed by Michael Smith for use with Amiga graphics. Interface attaches LCD shutter glasses to any ordinary video signal.

StereoPro: 3D stereoscopic viewing system developed by Michael Smith for use with Amiga graphics only. Directly compatible replacement for the old XSpecs3D product.

JobTracker: A professional project time tracking and billing tool developed by Tom DeVeau.

While MegageM

does not comment on products in development until they ship, they are working on one major additional enhancement to AV8RPro for automated video tape logging and digitizing that will greatly speed-up Flyer work.

MegageM supports direct purchases by end users as well as dealer and distributor sales. This allows end users to purchase products directly from MegageM, their local dealer or favorite mail order company.

Tech support is offered by phone or email. Their website is updated frequently and is the best place to get full detailed information on existing products and to spot announcements of new products. MegageM makes press releases through selected publications and on-line through Compuserve's Amiga Forum (Hot News and Rumors area) and the Video Toaster Mailing List.

In most cases, transferred owner registrations are honored by MegageM, and most of the hardware products they sell carry a one year warranty.

You can reach MegageM at: 1903 Adria Avenue, Santa Maria, CA 93454; Phone, 805-349-1104; Fax, 805-922-5003; Email, dewolf@megagem.com; URL, <http://www.megagem.com>

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Digital Media

New Company

Sagittarius Software

Sagittarius Software is a new American based software dealer focusing on high-quality Amiga programming and games. They carry the complete line of software from both Vulcan and 5th Dimension. They also offer a wide variety of Licenseware products. Because Vulcan Software is planning to enhance their line of products by producing high-quality CD-ROM titles for Amiga systems, Sagittarius is now offering current in-stock Vulcan software at discount pricing. You can order products on-line, by mail, FAX, or telephone. You can view all their products on their web site. Sagittarius Software, 1706 Canton Road, Akron, OH 44312. Phone: 800-426-7687; FAX: 1-330-794-2170; URL: <http://sagsoft.ald.net/>; Email: sales@sagsoft.ald.net

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Enhancements



Workbench Extras

By Brad Webb

Windows, icons and pulldown menus are the elements of the Amiga's graphical user interface. We've looked at enhancing the operating system's use of windows and menus before. This time, we'll see what we can do to enhance working with icons.

The first thing to note is there are several compromises with the Amiga's default icon set. It's limited to four colors, it's designed for medium resolution (640 by 200) screens, and many programs you buy or download come with icons that don't look good with the default set. This last is a result of the immense flexibility available to users of the Amiga, but it can make your Workbench look more like a rummage sale than an organized display.

There are several things you can do. A common answer is to use the Magic Workbench set of icons. Most programs now come with Magic Workbench icons as an option. However, some don't, and there are those who'd prefer some other look to their Workbench. In either case an icon manager program can help.

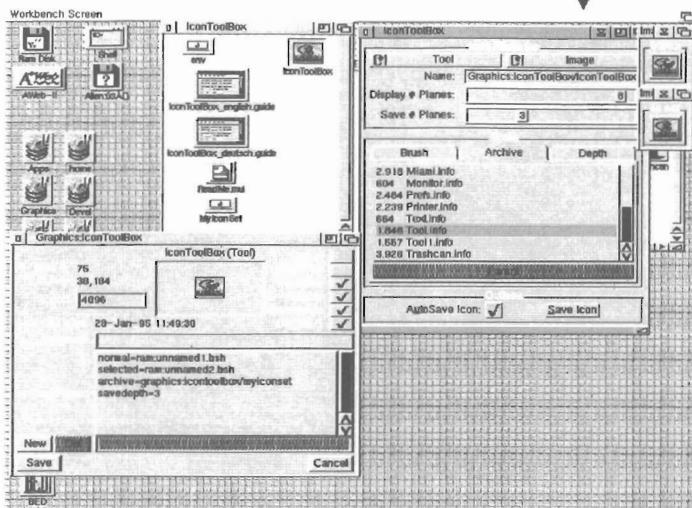
We'll examine a program called IconToolBox. There are other good icon managers, such as IdB, which accomplish the same end. IconToolBox uses MUI, while IdB does not.

An icon manager provides an easy way to change the look of icons. Sounds simple, and it is, but what a timesaver it can be if you want to control the look of your Workbench. Here's how it works. IconToolBox opens three windows when you run it. The main window is the control window. The two smaller windows provide views of an icon; one window for the "Normal" image, and one for "Selected." Where do these images come from? That's entirely up to you.

You can either use a pre-defined set of images, such as those with Magic Workbench, the Rare Diamonds set that

comes with IconToolBox, or create your own set with just about any icon editor. All you need do is copy any icon image you wish to use into a directory of your choosing. This directory is then made available to IconToolBox by editing a tool type in the IconToolBox icon. That's a confusing sentence, so let's look at an example.

On my Amiga I store the IconToolBox program in a partition called Graphics. In the IconToolBox directory I created another directory called MyIconSet, and I copy icons whose image I want to use for other files into this directory. Remember, the .info file is the icon. You don't need to copy the program, just its icon file. Graphics: is the name of the hard drive partition where IconToolBox is stored. To make this directory known to IconToolBox, I click once on the



It's easy to organize and place all your unique icon images with IconToolBox which provides straightforward icon management.

IconToolBox icon to select it. Then I use the "Icons/Information" Workbench menu to get the icon control window open. Click on the "archive" tool type to move it to the type-in box, edit it to point to your particular icon archive directory and press "Return," then "Save" the IconToolBox icon. (See illustration.) From this point, any icon you copy into that directory will appear on a list when you restart IconToolBox. To see the list,

continued on page 15

"Hey, what the heck is a tool type?"

A tool type is a piece of data passed to the program or the system when a program is run from the workbench. The tool types are stored with the icon in the program's ".info" file. If you click on an icon and then go to the "Icons/Information" menu item, you will be given a list of any tool types currently written to that icon. The specific information given to the program, and the names of each tool type, are different for each program. However, there are some standard tool types that can be used to pass information to the system such as: DONOTWAIT; CX_POPUP=[YES or NO]; CX_POPKEY=[YES or NO]; CX_PRIORITY=; TOOLPRI, STARTPRI; etc. Usually, the documentation of a program details what program tool types are available and what they specifically do. Often the programmer will put example tool types in the icon file. These are in parentheses and won't be used unless the parentheses are edited out. If you want to have some real fun with editing tool types, try Swazinfo on Aminet. It changes the icon information window and makes it more user friendly.

—Davis Sprague

Enhancements con't from page 14

you click on the Archive tab in the IconToolBox control window. While you're editing tool types, you should set the "savedepth" tool type to the number of planes you prefer.

Using your collection of images is very simple. Select the one you want to use by clicking on its name. Its images will appear in the small windows. Drop the icon you want to change onto the IconToolBox control window and the image will be copied to the icon and the icon resaved, if you've selected the "Auto Save Icon" box in the control window. Otherwise, you click on the "Save Icon" gadget. You can even multiple select a group of icons and drop them in the window. IconToolBox will change all of them.

The control window has other features. There are sliders to set the number of video planes that are displayed, and the number that the icon will have when it's saved. I use 3 planes, enough for 8 colors. You can go as high as 8 planes, or 256 colors, on Amigas that support that many.

IconToolBox has a Depth mode that tells you the depth of any icon dropped on the window once you've clicked on the "Depth" tab. This is one way to check on the depth of any icon you're interested in using for your archive. You can change the depth by adjusting the sliders in Archive mode and resaving your sample icon, if you wish.

IconToolBox is buried in the distribution file for the RareDiamonds icon set. This archive is available from Aminet sites as pix/icons/RareDiamonds.lha. IconToolBox is freeware, written by Martin Hauner. It hasn't been updated since 1995 but runs fine on my Amiga 3000 under Amiga OS 3.1. It should run on any Amiga with an operating system from 2.04 upwards. The documentation file, in AmigaGuide format, is difficult to follow but the program is fairly intuitive and I've told you pretty much everything you need to know.

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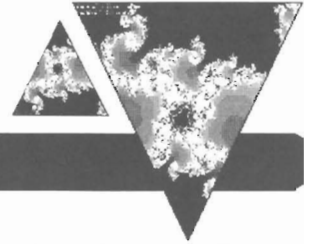
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Site Seeing



Playing in the MUD

By Davis Sprague

What is a MUD, and why are they so popular? MUD is an acronym for MultiUser Domain, sometimes misquoted as MultiUser Dungeon. The latter name comes from the parallels frequently drawn to the popular role playing games. A MUD is actually a complex interface to a database program, but the interface creates the illusion of a text based interactive reality. Really, words don't do it justice, and like IRC's, MUD's must be experienced to be understood. It is really like entering a different world, and as such, it has its own language (like IRC or email) that you have to be familiar with.

MUD's are client-server type software, which means that a client program, running on your local machine, interacts with a server program on the host

machine. The host machine runs the interface software and holds the database. The client program uses the telnet protocol to connect your computer to the server on the host machine.

All this is very technical, and does little to really explain what happens in a MUD. When you first sign on to a MUD, you will be prompted for a name for your "character." This will be your persona while in the MUD. After getting a character and a password, you are then "teleported" into the MUD. In the world of MUD's "teleportation" is how you cover distances without specific instructions, like go south. You will usually start out in an area where there are a lot of other characters, and will be given a general description of your surroundings. This is in the style of the traditional Infocom text based games. The best way to do things as a virgin MUD user is to quickly type "help." This will give a number of headings and basic informa-

tion about how to navigate your character around the MUD, do things and talk to people. Commonly, to speak, type the double quote (") character followed by what you want to say. To be seen doing something type a colon (:) followed by what you want to be doing. For example, "Hello everybody!" would appear to other users as (your character) says, "Hello everybody!". Another example is, : bows shyly. which would appear (your character) bows shyly.

How addictive is this activity? Well, several years ago Wired magazine ran an article about people who were failing out of school because of spending 18-24 hours a day in MUD's. Indeed, MUD's, much like the Internet itself, are a great social equalizer. Race, gender, age, infirmities can all be added, altered or removed from your MUD persona with a few keystrokes. Here the socially inept and the socialites can mingle on even grounds.

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PD Pick

Getting Connected

By Davis Sprague

Over the past few issues we've covered a number of distinct techniques and types of software used to access the Internet. While we've not covered all the topics for comprehensive Internet access, it is time to pull this all together into some grand system. In this article we will briefly discuss what's available and how to set it up in one integrated system for Internet access.

First, you will need a TCP/IP stack. There are several of these on the market and they are mostly standardized to be interchangeable. Of the available programs, Termite TCP comes with client software and is virtually automatic to configure to your system. Otherwise you can obtain Miami which is shareware and

autoconfigures with a few simple questions about your server. Then there's AmiTCP, which set the standard for the others. It's now commercial and requires an in-depth knowledge of TCP/IP and Amiga OS to set up. Finally, there's Mlink, which converts a shell UNIX account into a TCP/IP stack. It's a little glitchy and requires an understanding of UNIX to compile and install. Overall, for the novice, Termite TCP and Miami are the best offerings. Any information you need to get these stacks running can be obtained by your service provider's support line, even if they've never heard of an Amiga.

It would be nice if there was an integrated suite of programs for email, news, FTP and the web, but there currently isn't. There are a few attempts, like FNews, and Microdot that handle email and news, but in general it is best to pick and choose each component and tailor a

system that intercommunicates through Amiga OS or ARexx calls.

First, a dedicated email program is a must. There are three available programs with everything you'll need. These are YAM, AEmail, and Air Mail. AEmail doesn't require MUI, but I'd recommend installing MUI anyway, as it will probably be needed for some software that you'll want. These all come with installer scripts, and work with web browsers interactively with a little effort. To install these you need to know your account name and password, SMTP server and POP server. These should be obtained from your service provider. If you are running your TCP/IP software when you install AEmail, it will get this info automatically. You'll need to read the documentation to find out how to configure these programs to allow mailing from your choice of browser, but this is

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Of course, the next question is where do these virtual worlds come from? Well, they come from the users for the most part. Some MUD's give you the ability to add on as a right, and some ask that you request this permission from one of the higher-up users. This is usually called getting a "builder bit." This tag on your character in the database means that you can create new areas in the MUD, and with the permission of owners of the existing areas, link your new areas to the existing MUD to expand it.

The details of this are too long and detailed to go into at this point, and they vary from MUD to MUD, but this can be one of the most rewarding activities in MUDing. Of course, everything you build requires descriptive prose. This includes your character. Early on you will need to find out how to write a description for your character, so others will see some text when they "look" at you.

No discussion of any Internet activity would be complete without a bit on the available software. There are two types of MUD clients. The first is the simple telnet client. When run, these client programs set up a shell window to communicate

with the "host" machine. AmiTCP and Termite TCP come with telnet clients. The program AmiTelnet is an elegant elaboration of telnet client software and provides an excellent example of a well designed and stable interface. The second type of client is a dedicated MUD client. An example of this would be AmiMUD. The difference between this and a telnet client is that a MUD client is designed just for MUD's and allows many of the activities that are more mundane to be automated. AmiMUD is especially useful in battle MUD's (predominately combat oriented), where it can be configured to hit anyone striking at you, automatically cast healing spells if you are injured, etc. In a social MUD (predominately talking interaction) it can be used to trigger greetings from you whenever someone

new signs on, teleport you to a point where someone is paging you from, etc. AmiMUD allows you to save these activities as configurations that are different for each MUD.

Finally, only for the Internet obsessed without real lives, and my sympathy to you should you undertake it, there is an Amiga MUD server. MUD host owners have my deepest respect. They offer a fascinating free pastime for users, and generally take much grief about downtime and system failures. More power to you if you wish to join their ranks.

Like IRC, you can only really get a grasp on MUD's by using them. So start playing in the MUD.



Simple MUD actions:

Say ("") - makes your character say what follows

Emote (:) - makes your character do what follows it

Go (n,s,e,w,in,out,up,etc.) - moves you in the stated direction

Take - makes your character take an object

Drop - makes your character drop an object

Inventory (i) - tells you what you are carrying

Look (l) - either returns the description of your surroundings, or a specified object

Help - returns a list of helpful information

Places to start:

The Sprawl: chiba.picosof.com port 7777

Divination Web III: linux.matnet.net 9393

Husky MUD: butterfly.com 7777

Cardiff's MUD page:

<http://www.cm.cf.ac.uk/User/Andrew>.

Wilson/MUDlist/

Connected con't from page 18

usually made simple, by copying a line from the documentation to the browser preferences.

Next, I recommend checking out the available browsers. IBrowse, included in the Termite TCP package, requires MUI, but is very configured. Voyager is good in general, and is the first to accept Frames (needed for some WWW documents). AWeb is a good, stable and easy to configure browser, best for the absolute novice. Each of these will have either a script to adapt it to email and FTP clients, or a Preferences page dedicated to this, which you can edit according to your email and FTP programs instructions. The reason here is that the current browsers don't include dedicated email, news and FTP modules, so if a web site document is linked to an email, news or FTP document, the browser has to call another program to handle this.

Third, I feel you need an FTP client, if only to access Aminet and company support sites to get updated versions of your software. There are two stable and useful programs here, both with special Aminet access called ADT. ADT allows Aminet searches, and will show you new programs since your last log on. This greatly speeds your access to new software as it is presented. The two FTP clients are AmFTP and AmiFTP. The latter is packaged with Termite TCP, but they are both fully ARexx compatible, and so can be launched and called by browsers. They both install easily with installer scripts and require no specific configuration on their own. The documentation indicates how they can be called by browsers.

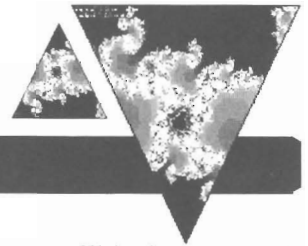
Fourth, I think you really should have a Usenet News client. Unfortunately, these are not as well developed as we might hope. Currently, I think mNews is the

easiest to install, and unless you are running in a low memory configuration, it is stable. Unfortunately, it will not at this point interface via ARexx or Amiga OS with a browser. To install your Newsreader you will need to get the NNTP server from your service provider. The remainder of the information you need will be the same data you collected to install your emailer.

These will cover about 95% of what you'll want to do as an Internet novice. I recommend playing around with these programs to find their potentials before going on. You will probably at some point want an IRC client, a finger utility, a telnet client and so on, but these are difficult to use for the novice, so I would stick to the basics at first. That's the basic Internet program suite as it stands. Happy Surfing.



Evaluations



REVIEWS

Air Mail

Air Mail Release 4.2 is the latest update to the popular email program from Toysoft Development. Amiga users with a connection to the internet can use this program to send and receive electronic mail to other connected computer users. I used Air Mail for a variety of tasks over an extended period and found it capable of meeting most of my needs very well. The operation proved unusual in one or two areas but was easily learned.

The two most important tasks of a mailer are to send and receive mail. Air Mail handles the comings and goings of mail well. Once you start to read your mail, however, you run into a limitation. There is no easy way to move from message to message. You have to close the window a message is in, then click on the next message in the list to open another window. Gadgets for "next" and "previous" would greatly improve the user interface, especially when dealing with a large amount of mail.

A second lack that will be noticed by many users is the absence of support for mailing lists. You must select all recipients manually for any message you send.

There was only one other real negative, and it probably will not concern most users. The lack of a BCC or "Blind Carbon Copy" feature. This is used to send copies to individuals without noting them in the header of the message. Its purpose is not just to be sneaky. I use this feature to send mass mailings without creating a huge header to torment each reader. The lack of BCC renders Air Mail useless to me, but mine is probably a rare circumstance.

Air Mail has its own editor, or you can configure it to use any text editor of your choosing. The internal editor is fine for short notes, but slows down considerably when writing a large message, especially on inserts near the start of the text. This is a common failing with Amiga mailers. Air Mail's editor is actually superior to some others I've used. External editors avoid this problem entirely.

There are many features available in Air Mail, despite the lacks noted. Some are truly unique.

Filters are provided to allow you to block specific messages, or to automatically file messages on receipt. Air Mail can have multiple configurations defined so you can use it with multiple email accounts. It can be used as an off-line mail reader. In this mode, your messages are queued for later sending.

Special True Signatures can be used. These are basically a small paint program file that must be sent to recipients separately and installed in their copy of Air Mail.

When further letters arrive from you the True Signature will be activated. There are limitations to this system, but in certain circumstances it should be fun. Similarly limited is the Forms function. Forms consist of special layouts for your email that can include graphics. Like True Signatures though, Forms can only be used with Air Mail.

Lovers of "tag lines," those clever one line sayings at the bottom of so many

email messages, will be happy to note that tags are supported by Air Mail. This includes files of tag lines that can be randomly selected.

It is possible to add attachments to your messages. However, a third party encoding program will have to be obtained and installed on your Amiga to make this work. Recommendations are made in the manual.

You work with Air Mail through a series of windows, accessed from the Main Tool Bar. Gadgets (under Amiga OS 2.1) or icons (under 3.X) are used to access most functions. This takes a bit of learning, but the help balloons provided by MUI make it easier. Once learned, they work well. The various windows are laid out intelligently and function logically together.

One oddity in working with Air Mail slowed me down at first. When sending mail, you select addresses from your address book by dragging them from one part of a window to another. Once you become used to the system, it works fine. You can also type in an address, but you must first go to the address book window.

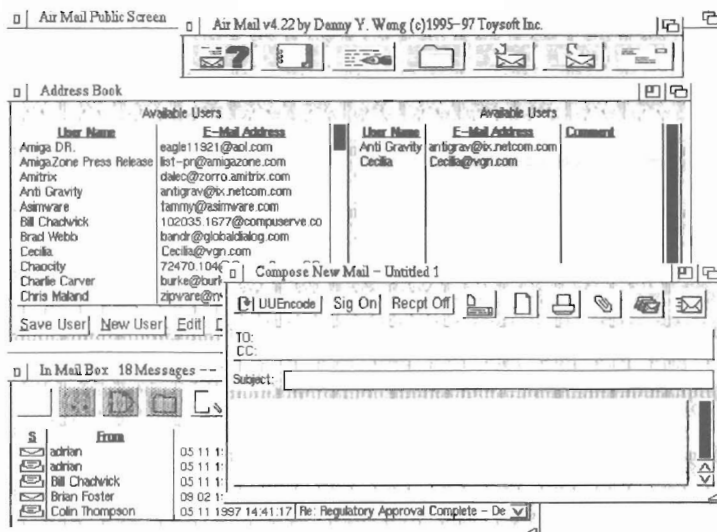
Air Mail comes with a well-illustrated printed manual that adequately covers all aspects of the program. It's a bit terse in spots and the English is sometimes weak, but should not prove confusing in most cases.

Overall, this is a stable, capable mail program. If the effort expended on less needed features such as True Signature, Forms and Tags had been used for more basic features like mailing lists, BCC and a good way of moving from message to message in your mail box, it would be an excellent program. As it is, these limitations should be considered carefully by anyone selecting an email program. I grade it a C.

Air Mail is shareware. It was tested on an A3000/25 MHz, 12 Mb Fast, 2 Mb CHIP, OS 3.1. Price is US \$40 plus \$5 shipping and handling. It should run on all Amigas with Amiga OS 2.1 or higher. Also required is MUI 3.2 or later, and a TCP/IP stack such as Miami, AmiTCP/IP or Termite TCP. It's a product of Toysoft Development, Inc., 131 - 64 Ave. NW, Calgary, Alberta, T2K 0L9, Canada. www.spots.ab.ca/~toysoft.

Rating: C

By Brad Webb



Drag-n-drop addressing, message filtering and intuitive interface, combined with unique features such as Tags, Forms and Signatures, make Air Mail a complete package.

Pretium

Pretium, by David Orr, is a checkbook and personal finance management program. It presents a user-interface that looks for the most part like a familiar checkbook layout. With Pretium, one can track several accounts simultaneously, use categories to organize income and expenditures, print checks, generate detailed reports (viewable on-screen or printed) and import/export Quicken files.

Pretium requires an Amiga with OS 2.04 or better, and runs from a hard drive or a single floppy. Though not required, a printer is strongly recommended. This review was conducted on an A3000 with 68030 CPU, Amiga OS 3.1, 2 Mb Chip RAM and 16 Mb Fast RAM. A demo of version 1.1 is available on Aminet as `biz/misc/pretium.lha`.

Pretium supports three types of accounts: Checking, Savings and Credit. Savings accounts use no check numbers, for example, and credit accounts show black for negative balances and red for positive.

Pretium files are Account Groups. An account group is a collection of any number of related accounts, of any type, that may be open and in use at the same time. Multiple groups may be set up and saved, possibly for use by different family members, or keeping personal and home business finance separate.

Entering records is straightforward, if keyboard-intensive. Simply activate the desired account window and enter the information into the necessary fields. Fields are available for the date, check number, payee, amount, category and memo for each record. The tab key quickly moves between fields, much like a spreadsheet.

In a checking account, the option exists to automatically assign the next sequential check number, and the payee and category fields have wildcard capability using the familiar '#' and '?' characters.

Categories are a feature above and beyond those of a standard checkbook. Categories are completely user-definable headings under which transactions are grouped. Each transaction may be placed in a single category. Running totals are maintained for each category in the category window. Categories support one level of sub-categories and any sub-category totals will be added into the parent category's total.

Transferring funds between accounts (as in paying a check to a credit card) is

tedious at best. Activate the Transfer function from the pull-down menu or hotkey and a dedicated requestor opens. Transfer transactions are entered independently into the respective accounts and not linked in any way.

Pretium keeps an active, running balance for every account. This is very handy for spot-checking checkbook addition. A 'cleared' balance is also indicated. Individual transactions are cleared by double-clicking them, generally in comparison to a printed statement.

Simplicity of report generation is one of the program's strengths, though that simplicity comes at the expense of control. Reports may be viewed on screen or printed from any account, group of accounts or category, and sorted by category within an account. Reports may contain a single topic (account or category) or all topics. Transactions may be sorted by cleared/uncleared, date and category. All printouts are in a default printer font and there is no option to print to a file.

I cannot comment on the printed manual as my review copy had none. However, the extensive AmigaGuide help file, though not linked to the program, was more than sufficient.

Overall, Pretium is a very capable program with enough features to keep those of us dedicated to financial accuracy happy for years. If you are familiar with any sort of finance-management software, you will find the change to Pretium to be simply one of acclimation. This one earns a solid B+ from this reviewer. Having used Phasar on the Amiga for years, I found Pretium's clean, customizable interface very refreshing. Pretium retails for US \$54.95 and is available from select dealers or directly from IDD Software, 204 NW 25th St., Gainesville, FL 32607. Phone: 352-373-9471; Email: `idd@pobox.com`; URL: `www.pobox.com/~idd`

Rating B+

By Robert Pigford



Many support programs (ViewTek, Lha, UUxT, dms, etc.) want to be placed in the C: directory. Instead, create a new directory in your System partition called C2: by using a file manager like Dopus. Add C2: to your path by typing "path sys:c2 add" in the Shell. Now add the support programs to C2: instead of cluttering up your original C: directory.

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Tiny Troops

Tiny Troops is a strategy game that pits the Klutes and Furfurians of Agaris IV against each other on Earth. They have gone unnoticed by the people of Earth though, as the Earth people are 100 times larger than them in size.

Before you get engaged in the war you must choose the side you want to play, and the troops you want to use. Using a scrollable map to survey the battlefield, you can choose the troops appropriate to the terrain. While doing this, you can ask your General for advice, which can be most helpful.

The game comes with a small instruction booklet that gives you a quick summary of the game in a straightforward manner. From there, the best way to find out more about the game is to actually experience it.

You start out with a few easy levels, and then advance to more difficult ones. The object is simple enough; destroy the enemy and keep yourself alive. Later missions become more complex with goals such as rescuing prisoners or destroying installations. As you advance through the levels, you get better weap-

ons and vehicles, but so does the enemy.

The game has plenty of good quality graphics throughout. It takes a little time to become used to the interface but it's fairly quick to learn, and the game moves along well after the initial learning phase. Tiny Troops also has a good complement of music and sound effects. There is a multitude of background noises that can be used for audio hints as to what is going on outside your range of sight.

The only bad point I found is that the introduction is more or less obligatory. It can be sped up by using the space bar, but there is no option to simply bypass it. While it is a quite amusing animation, like all introductory animations, it gets tedious after a while.

The game does have to be used in PAL mode to work. I contacted the vendor by email, and received a quick response to my queries. However, the answers to my problem came from a source other than Vulcan, so I cannot judge how good the technical support is by this account.

No special hardware or software is needed to use the product and installation is quite straightforward. It is compatible with all Amigas with 1 Mb and plays

from hard drive or floppies. I tested the game on an A3000/25 MHz with 2 Mb Chip RAM and 12 Mb Fast RAM using Kickstart and Workbench 3.1 and a Picasso IV graphics board.

Overall, Tiny Troops is a good game with solid graphics, sound, and playability. With 65 levels to play through, Tiny Troops has good depth. It is loaded with many tactical situations and puzzles to explore throughout all levels and is quite addictive and absorbing. Tiny Troops is one of those games where you can easily find yourself looking at the clock and saying "just one more game." I definitely think this game deserves an A.

Tiny Troops retails for about US \$35 and is available through dealers listed on Vulcan's website. A demo version is also available at the Vulcan website. Vulcan Software Limited, Vulcan House, 72 Queens Road, Buckland, Portsmouth, Hants PO2 7NA England. Phone: 44 (0) 1705 670269; FAX: 44 (0) 1705 662226; Email: paul@vul-soft.demon.co.uk; URL: <http://www.vulcan.co.uk>.

Rating: A

By Bill Schuck

Tiny Troops Tips

Coordinate your troops attack patterns early, by concentrating all your firepower on one of the enemy troops at a time.

Arrange things so that all your troops engage the enemy at the same time, delivering one huge wave of destruction.

When the enemy has superior firepower, it's better to take the battle nearer to your base by clicking on the retreat icon.

Speed up your troops firing rate by using the forced fire option. First click on an individual troop or box around a large group of troops, click on the attack icon (the clenched fist), then click on the target. This causes your troops to fire another shot in addition to their usual attacks.

Flame-throwers can be used to fire through walls and obstacles.

The converge icon can be very useful for getting troops out of trouble or to stop them from chasing enemy troops into dangerous places.

Using the repair icon is a quick way to send individual troops back to base without sounding a full-scale retreat.

Summaries

AGA Experience 2 is the latest follow-up in the line of "Experience" CD's from Sadness. It features an easy to use interface that allows you to configure the CD to run most programs directly from the disk. This familiar format, similar to the cover-mounted British magazine CD's, gives you options to temporarily change your system colors, fonts and prefs, providing a nice feel while browsing.

Everything is organized in a neat manner and nearly all the directories have text files that give details on the content of each directory. Most of the files on this CD are ready to run. However, there are a few compressed DMS files which inconveniently require you to decompress to floppy. The demos have a useful feature that gives you a requester stating the requirements of the demo and allows you to bail if you don't meet them. Unfortunately, many of the demos don't run on 040 and, presumably, 060 processors. By far, I think "Icons" is the best directory. Here you will find bunches of backdrops, bootpictures, patterns, pictures, webpage backgrounds and an incredible

amount of MagicWorkBench icons, patterns, images and tiles. NewIcon images abound too. Invariably, you will find that you have to reboot your system more than once when trying to run some programs from this CD, especially games. Not all are going to work on your system. Likewise, any CD compilation will become outdated given time, but, if you don't have ready access to the internet or the time it takes to hunt programs down, you will find a lot worth having in this CD.

Dune 2: Battle for Arrakis

is a classic strategy game that pits your House (either Atreides, Ordos or Harkonnen) against two other Houses for control of the lucrative Spice found on Arrakis. Careful planning in building each base and manufacturing and deploying the many various support vehicles is necessary to complete each mission. Each House has it's own specialty weapons which are made available depending on how you choose to proceed with your base deployment. Tactical planning and foresight are required to make it through each mission,

continued on page 25

DiskSalv 4

For years Amiga users have had one place to turn for help when the inevitable disk crash occurs – DiskSalv. In this article I will review the latest version of this software, DiskSalv 4.

This program was developed by one of the original Amiga Guru's of the old Commodore Amiga, Dave Haynie, and will reconstruct almost any disk after an error corrupts the available data. Along with a Salvage mode that reconstructs trashed disks, this program has Undelete and Unformat (for those dreaded "OOPS's"), as well as Repair, Check, and a Backup mode.

The version 2 demo, found under util/disk on Aminet, is several years old, and doesn't have all the much improved algorithms in the new commercial version, but it will give you an idea of what the power of this program could be.

The software requires no specific hardware or software, and will work well on a minimum configured A500, as well as an A4000. I recommend it more strongly for

those using a hard drive, but it works fine on a diskette based system as well. It requires Amiga OS 2.04, and supports all file systems. It was tested under Amiga OS 2.04 and 3.0 using an A1200 and A2000 both with hard drives, in both accelerated (68030) and standard modes.

The software itself has no copy protection and no dongles. It does however come with a plea not to distribute the commercial version in the documentation, with instructions on how to obtain the shareware version to offer to friends. The installation is automatic with the standard Amiga installer. The documentation is exemplary, and explains the reasons disks get trashed and how the program works, and well as giving a list of all the known difficulties with the software. It is written on a basic level and covers all the needed information in a way that only an Amiga developer can.

I have very few if any complaints about this program. It is reliable and the interface is well thought out with on-line help as well as scaled icon buttons for program control. The icons are scaled to the screen font in an attempt to make the

icons adapt to the screen mode. I would prefer them to be user scalable, but this is a minor complaint.

The distributor, Intangible Assets Manufacturing, offers the email addresses of their staff and special addresses for reporting bugs. Using this you should be able to consult with Dave Haynie himself. They do not offer telephone support and there is no warranty offered in the documentation.

Overall, I give this software an A. It has helped with countless messes caused mostly by testing other beta release software. I owe the timely correction of multiple corrupt files and the revalidation of my hard drive on many passes to this program. It is a must for any software developer, beta tester, or for any Amiga user.

DiskSalv4 is published by Intangible Assets Manufacturing, 828 Ormond Ave., Drexel Hill PA 19026-2604. The retail price is US \$35. Orders: 610-853-4406; Fax: 610-853-3733; Email: info@iam.com; URL: www.iam.com.

Rating: A

By Davis Sprague



Summaries can't from page 24

which progressively get more difficult. You have the option to play any house, and will start in a different map location randomly with each scenario. Graphics and game play are excellent even though the game is not new. A well designed interface and good audio make the game easy to learn and addictive. It is HD installable and was tested on a NTSC A2000, 1 Mb CHIP, Fast RAM, OS 3.1, 030 and 040 CPU. Highly recommended.

Syndicate is a game that always had a following on the Amiga. It is a superb blend of strategy and arcade action that is easy to learn but hard to master. As an Executive in one of the many syndicates that dominate the world, it's your job to select and arm a small group of cyborgs to carry out each mission. Through careful selection of weapons—of which there are many to choose—and proper mission intelligence, you must take over territories from rival syndicates. You control up to four cyborgs to accomplish this task and can selectively add enhancements to their design to improve their performance. However, you must devote resources to research these new and powerful weapons and cyborg enhancements, they are not just given to you. Each mission requires a different approach, from stealth to brute force, and you have to expend a good amount of planning effort to accomplish each progressively harder scenario. Syndicate is quite addicting and once you complete all the missions, you will find yourself wanting to hunt down the add-on mission packs to keep going. Syndicate is HD installable and performed perfectly on a NTSC A2000, 1 Mb CHIP, Fast RAM, both an 030 and 040 CPU, and OS 3.1.



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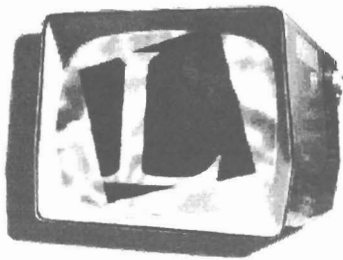
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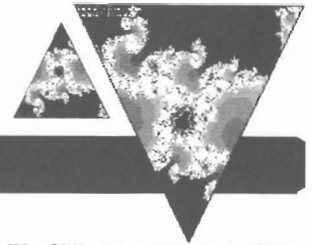
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