

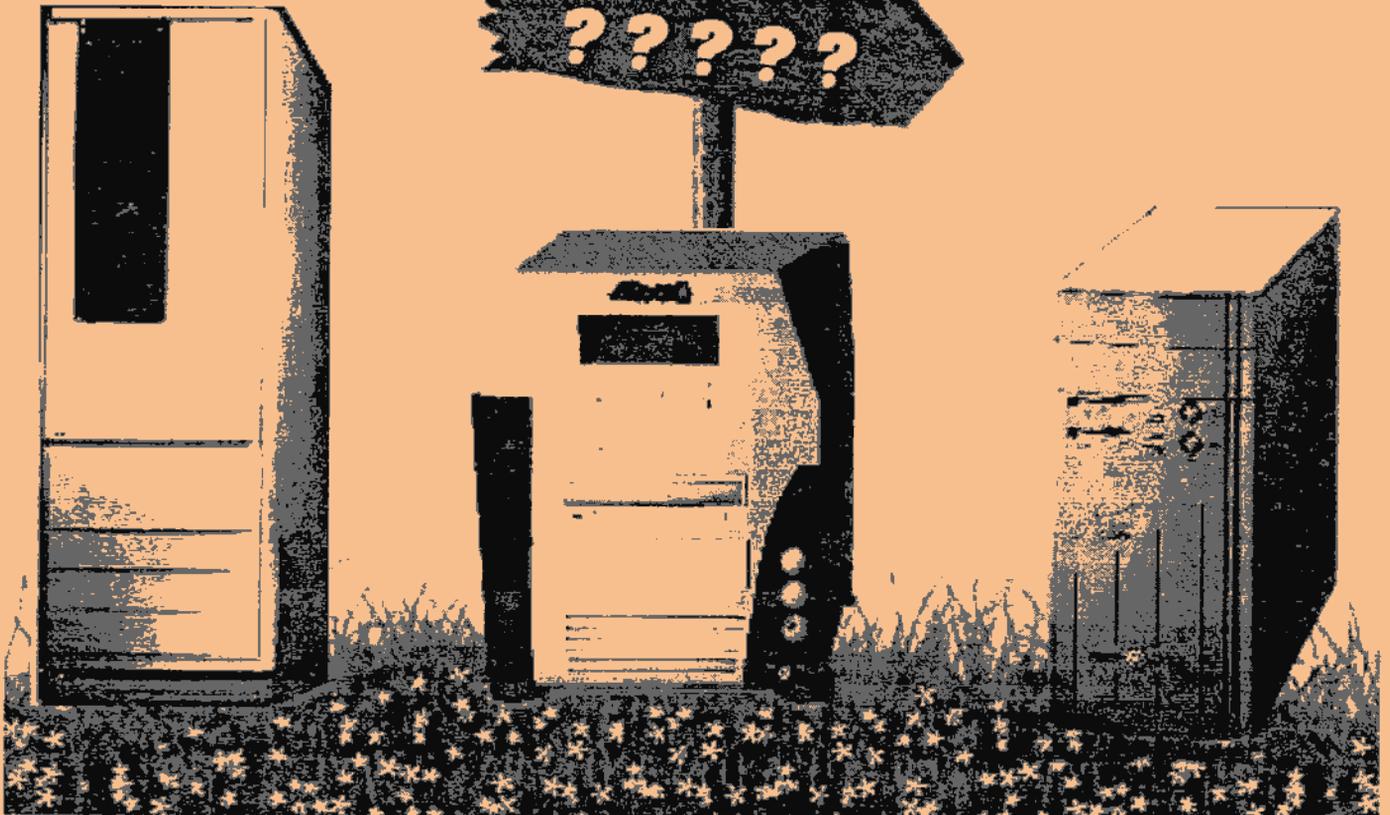
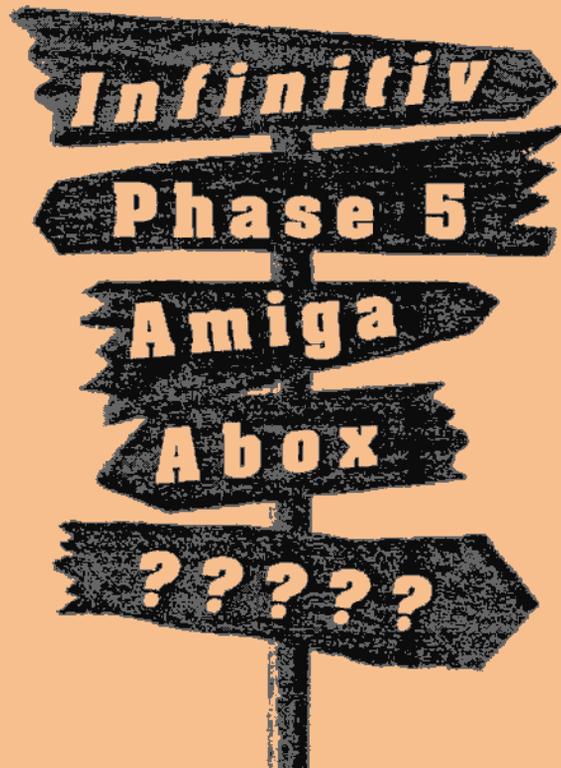
Australian Amiga

July 97

Issue No 8

Gazette

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Editorial

Dribbble



The Australian Amiga Gazette is a grassroots publication, created for the purpose of keeping the Amiga dream alive in Australia and beyond.

The opinions expressed in editorials, articles, reviews and letters are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the position of AAG.

Letters to the editor are invited, letters may be edited to meet editorial requirements.

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Firstly, I must say thank you very much to everyone who stopped at the AAG stand at the show to say hello and express their appreciation for our efforts. It really makes the frustrating bits of organizing a show fade into insignificance.

Overall the show turned out to be a great success; so much so that we are working on a Melbourne show for October 1997 - "AAG MK II" which is shaping up to be twice as big as the Sydney show.

Well we are finally seeing the cogs of Amiga International turning. AI has granted licences to companies to produce varied Amiga configurations, one of which is the "Infinitiv Towersystem". Stated in their press release, "The new Infinitiv towersystem represents a further milestone in the successful Amiga history".

For those who don't know the "Infinitiv" is basically a modified PC case that will house a 1200 motherboard fitted with a bus expansion card. Sorry no milestone in Amiga history more like a yard-pebble. A new Amiga model with PPC driven motherboard could be considered as a milestone. Don't

get me wrong, I think the "Infinitiv" is a great case and I will get one for our 1200, but all we are seeing is brick-veneer being nailed onto an old fibro house.

It is not like Amiga users are asking for new cutting edge Technology like a computer that has stereo sound, displays 4096 colours on the screen and can multitask in only 512K of memory. No, we would be happy with just being up to speed with the remainder of the world.

Until a company, be it AI or other, comes out with a complete system in the box ready for the average home user to buy over the counter, take home and plug in (including monitor and printer), plus spend some real dollars on marketing the said system, the Amiga market will remain in suspended animation (iff format).

The timing is right. The mainstream PC market has assimilated all of Amiga's characteristics to some degree and has run out of ideas. Many PC users have become disillusioned with mainstream PC and are hungry for a new (really a redesigned Amiga) platform.

Melbourne Amiga Show

Amiga Expo
•AAG•
Australian Amiga Gazette



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Australian Amiga Gathering 97
October 97 * **Melbourne** *

Bigger
than the
Sydney Show

**Stay tuned
to this page for
all the details**

NEWS

I'm your host
Michael Gruber
and here is the
news



Welcome to another edition of AAG news. I'm your host Michael Gruber, here to inform you of the latest on Amiga from around the world and at home.

First the international news...

It's Alive... Alive!

Yet to be confirmed, a company called Alive Mediasoft are involved with Direct Software in converting popular game titles from mainstream computer platforms.

Direct Software an Amiga dealer in the UK who announced the release of the Power Amiga (a A1200 upgrade package) are also rumoured to have been involved with converting popular game titles like Doom and Dark Forces to Amiga. Such initiatives started by Direct Software will now apparently be shared with Alive Mediasoft.

Tower above the rest

AAG News have just received word that Amiga International have signed the first license agreement with MicroniK.

MicroniK, a German Amiga developer, produce the MicroniK Infnitiv Towersystem.

The Infnitiv Towersystem is a tower case and expansion system which houses a A1200 motherboard.

The Infnitiv system offers several

practical features.

The base tower unit can be expanded vertically with snap and click "top case" expansion modules, adding extra drive bays to the original tower as required.

The other powerful feature of the Towersystem is the Bus-Board.

The Bus-Board unit expands the original A1200 motherboard, providing Zorro slots for standard Amiga expansion cards. It also includes an A3000/A4000 compatible CPU slot, allowing the use of accelerators normally limited to the high-end Amigas.

In fact MicroniK are releasing several models of their Towersystems.

The A1500 will feature the "Z-3i" version of the Bus-Board which will provide five Zorro II/III Slots, one PC-ISA slot, two PC-PCI slots, one optional Video slot, one SCSI-2 controller and one CPU A3000/A4000 slot, plus a pass through connection to the original A1200 CPU port.

The next model down, the A1400, features the "Z-2i" version of the Bus-Board which provides five Zorro II slots (no Zorro III cards here), two PC-ISA slots, two PC-PCI slots, one optional Video slot and a pass through to the original A1200 expansion port. This version does not include the A3000/A4000 CPU compatible expansion slot.

Then there is the A1300 system by MicroniK which is an A1200 motherboard fitted into the Infnitiv Tower System, but without the Bus-Board expansion unit.

Contact G-Soft the Australian distributor for MicroniK.

Fusion Power

Blittersoft have announced the release of Fusion. The new MAC emulator for Amiga.

While few details were available to AAG at the time, a full review of this exciting new product should be made available soon.

Amiga Access'd

Last issue AAG reviewed the Access Amiga by Index a United Kingdom company.

News has just come to hand that Amiga International, following through with their open licensing policy, have now licensed Index to produce the Access system.

This agreement allows Index to use the Amiga OS on their machines. If or when Access is made available to retailers rather than just the commercial sector,



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NEWS

then consumers will have the security of knowing that these machines should be 100% Amiga OS compatible.

Hover Bomber

Aurora Works inc. will soon release a game called H-Bomb (Hover Bomber).

What will possibly make this game addictive is that it is multi-player, allowing up to four players; it will provide this support via a TCP-IP local or remote network.

H-Bomb will only be available on CD-ROM, it will include 20 playing fields with an editor to generate more.

Our source indicates that the minimum system requirements will be a 68030 25MHz AGA Amiga running OS 3.0 as a minimum. With 4meg Fast RAM, at least 1.6 free Chip RAM and a CDROM drive.

Now to local news...

Official Re-Launch of Amiga in Australia

The biggest news in Australia was the official re-launch of Amiga at the Australian Amiga Gathering 97 expo.

AAG'97 was organised by the Australian Amiga Gazette, brainchild of Michael Burak, the Editor of the Australian Amiga Gazette.

The show was held at the Sydney

Showgrounds, home to the Royal Easter Show for the last hundred years.

The expo was set inside the Kensington Centre and held on Saturday and Sunday the 28th and 29th of June

Despite poor weather conditions and rain on Sunday morning, attendance was good. Almost a thousand people attended AAG'97.

The backbone of the show were the Amiga dealers. Travelling to Sydney from around Australia, they included, Amadeus Computers, Amiga Genius, Computer Magic, G-Soft, GP Software, Tek Media, Unicorn Solutions, Unitech Electronics and Power Computing from the United Kingdom.

Among the user groups which attended the Australian Amiga User Group Conference held on Sunday afternoon were AUGVIC, CAUSE, CHUG and NWAUG. Both Commodore Hornsby User Group and North West Amiga User Group ran information booths at the show.

Petro Tyschtschenko, president of Amiga International was unable to attend the show personally. Basil Flinter, representing Amiga international was present to read a statement from Amiga International. The full statement has been printed in this month's issue.

A second statement was also

presented at AAG'97.

The IC/OA, the Industry Council and Open Amiga Organisation, were represented at the show by Guy Nathan and Paul Morabito.

The statement read by Guy Nathan described the IC/OA's initiatives and their call for Australians to support them. Paul Morabito was on hand to answer questions regarding the IC/OA.

Another feature of AAG'97 was the Shareware Registration Booth. An initiative to support Amiga shareware authors and allow them to sell their products direct to the public.

Due to the success of the show the organisers are now gearing up for an Amiga show in Melbourne in October this year.

Finally, the Whether Report...

The Whether Report will be a monthly feature, reporting on a discussion current on the mailing lists and newsgroups.

And now this month's Whether Report;

"With Gateway 2000 now owning all the rights to Amiga, there is speculation on whether the AAA or Hombre chipset technology will be considered again for new Amigas."

That concludes the news for this month.

Michael Gruber.

AAG

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AAG97 Show Report

Reporter: Darren Robertson

Photographics: Greg Perry

The Australian Amiga Gathering was a very successful event. It was organized by the Australian Amiga Gazette team.

Who was there. Well the attendee's include G Soft, Amadeus, Unitech, Tech Media, Amiga Genius, GP Software, Resource Management Force, Computa Magic, Unicorn Solutions and from the UK Power Computing.

Also putting in an appearance all the way from Melbourne were NWAUG (North West Amiga User Group), from Sydney CHUG (Commodora Hornsby User group) and St. John's Park High School.

The event was attended by the real hard-core Amiga fans. These people were there to put the zing into the show. They had put a lot of faith into the Amiga show being a success, and it wasn't misplaced. I didn't interview them on the way out, but most were carrying a bag of goodies.

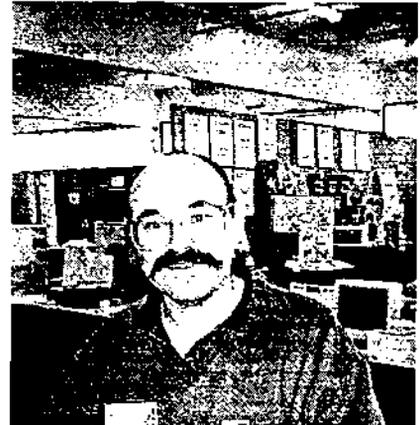
The best part of the show was the prices of the products. For us Amigans that don't get out often it was a wonderful surprise to see the prices on some of the gear we dream of.

Who didn't make it. Well Phase 5 were planning to put in a real showing but the technology and information didn't arrive in time for

the show, G Soft were representing Phase 5 but it was sad not to see the PowerUp Boards in action. Amiga International were represented by Basil a gentleman from TAEN (The Amiga Education Network). Basil read out a speech sent from the president of AI Mr Petro Tyschtschenko that morning.



What did you miss out on if you didn't go. Well a run down of the show starts at the AAG stand. This is where you could register a large number of Overseas shareware programs without the hassle of international Money orders. Programs included Delitracker II, Wildfire, Shapeshifter and many others. Also available at the show were back issues of the Magazine These were snapped up very quickly and the two Michael's had machines set up to churn out shareware disks.



G Soft were around behind them occupying a rather large stand, selling everything from Miami TCP and Picasso cards (These disappeared on the first day), the fabled CyberVision 64/3D (4mb version \$450) and Mikronic (The first Amiga licensees) Tower cases for the A1200.



Opposite them was a new-comer Tech Media. This is run by some of the guys that helped out at the old Sigmacom. They were demonstrating the power of the Amiga and the MacroSystem's DraCo and Cassabianca. Tech Media are a company that stand by what they sell, producing video for a number of Australian and overseas clients. The DraCo is an amazing box to watch at work-well you only see the MovieShop screen on the DraCo, but on the Video monitor is the most amazing quality video playback. There was also a 4000T with a Scala Mpeg play back card running off the hard drive.



Next to them was Resource Management Force (RMF for short). These people are the makers of the Quicknet cards for Zorro based Amigas. They also were demonstrating the A500 ethernet and an Amiga 1200 trap-door based network card. In talking to them I discovered they also have nearly finished an expansion adaptor for the CD32 to make it compatible with A1200 expansion. By doing this a CD32 can use the A1200 ethernet card. Interestingly it could also use any A1200 CPU upgrade 040, 060, or even maybe a 603e PowerUp board.

Beside them was my own little

company Unicorn Solutions, showing how Amigas can be networked together. Two A4000's, Novell file server using NFS (UNIX Network File System), Win95 PC, Win95 Laptop and an A1200 with the famed CNET PCMCIA ethernet card installed in it. The card was offered to show goes for a show special of \$175. The A1200 was stock except for a larger hard drive. There was even an A600HD with a CNET card running AMITCP.



Around the back was Amadeus, another long term Amiga supporter. They were doing a serious trade in CD-Roms of all types, Games, Utilities, Aminet and other software archive CD's. They were also demonstrating the SCSI Mpeg box, a device that can playback Mpeg movies from a CDROM on the same SCSI controller (it's from the makers of the Squirrel SCSI).

Next to Amadeus was the NWAUG, giving advice and help to any who asked. They also had some second hand gear for sale, as well as handing out their User Group newsletter. These guys are responsible for causing a stir at a recent PC market sale in Melbourne, by demonstrating the Amiga to an unsuspecting PC crowd. All who watched were

stunned that a little keyboard could do so much or that expansions for their forgotten Amigas were so cheap now.



On the side wall was the St. John's Park High School demonstrating just how well the Amiga can be used as a teaching tool. I had a long talk to some of the teachers from the school while demonstrating the VLAB motion-card. This is a seriously switched on school, educating the students in the arts of TV and multimedia.



Unitech had a packed stand with their ever growing supply of cables, Rom switchers and hardware. Another in the products that didn't quite make it includes a new tower system from Unitech. This product will be released very shortly. We will follow it up as soon as it is out.

More On The AAG97 Show



GP Software had a stand plastered with copies of Dopus and Dopus T-Shirts. The man of GP Software was there, Greg Perry, still with Commodore products since the C64, and his sidekick Jonathan Potter. I managed to hide from Greg for a while as I use Diskmaster rather than Dopus. Unfortunately I missed out on his Dopus seminar and have not yet been converted to Dopus, but I can't hold out much longer.



The Power Computing stand was manned in person by staff who came out from England for the show. This was where a lot of drooling was done. They were

selling all manner of product including accelerators for the A1200, for example an Apollo 040/33mhz for just \$399 or the 060/50mhz \$879. Don't you just wish you had one of these, the prices are almost half what they used to be. Power Computing were also selling CV64 3D and Picasso IV as well as a new CD Amiga game called Big Red Adventure. They even had an A600 030/42mhz + 8mb ram for \$350 (who said an A600 wasn't expandible?)

We also had Computa Magic, who brought along a wide range of products from some very good speakers, Mice and more A1200 accelerators, plus lots of software. They were also demonstrating a new product which also wasn't quite ready for the show. This is an external flicker fixer for all Amigas. It was being demonstrated with an A2000 running Eric Schwartz's Aerotoons on a VGA monitor.

Just inside the door was Amiga Genius who were showing off the Siamese PC intergration system, allowing you to run an Amiga and a IBM Clone as one machine. They also had the Golden Gate + Bus bridge. This allows the use of PC cards in big box Amigas. For example you could run a PC net-card or IDE controller as a cheap alternative to the more expensive Amiga ones. Also the Graffiti Amiga external video enhancer was shown of in shapeshifter. This allows Mac emulation to run on an 030 based A2000 in 256 colours at a very good speed. There are a number of products that support the Graffiti graphics card and for

\$150 its a good investment. These guys must also be hoarding all the stocks of old chips. There was every chip you could imagine for the OCS machines in a huge carton.



CHUG had a stand as well. They were demonstrating their own machines and answering questions about the user group and the Amiga in general. While playing a few games in between.

During both days there were seminars at one end of the hall in a big tent. Up on a bigscreen projector they were showing off the Cassabianca. This is an 060 based Amiga that does non-linear video editing like the DraCo. With a few less functions and a much smaller price tag. Dopus 5.6 Mageilan was run on the big screen as well, showing how Dopus can be run as a Workbench replacement. I did a quick demonstration of the CNET ethernet cards. I just couldn't get Win95 to recognize a CD-Rom I had installed in the PC, much to the amusement of show goers.



The overall attendance to the show was 932 with more than half attending the first day. The initial reaction by people who didn't go

to the show, was I didn't think it would be worth it. From the comments I have had back on IRC a lot of them now feel they missed out on something special, as the show was rated a success by the people who went. The future of these shows is looking better. There are plans in the pipeline to do another one in Melbourne in October. It's going to be pretty close to this one but once again it is going to be a success, especially with all the products that we missed by weeks with this show. Also it gives the people of Melbourne a chance to attend a show that is not 1000km away.

Many thanks to the guys from G Soft, NWAUG, GP Software who came a long way just for a two day show. For them it would be more than a week of hard work to pack up, bring the gear with them and unpack when they got back.

Even bigger thanks to the guys from Power Computing who came out from England. Next time I will bring more money, prices like that are too hard to pass up more than once.



Amiga & Video + Sound

by Paul Graham

Welcome to the AMIGA & VIDEO section of the magazine and to the second part of MUSIC & VIDEO on the AMIGA. Adding Sounds During the Editing Process.

You will probably not be adding sounds during the actual editing process, but either before or just after you have completed editing the video. Planning is the main tool that you will use when adding audio during the edit stage. This is where the AMIGA is going to play the biggest role. In the creation of music and sound effects the AMIGA can help you compose and play back music.



With a sound sampler or audio digitizer you can create realistic music or un-realistic sounds effects or for that matter realistic sound effects. The advantage of adding the sound during the edit stage is that you have complete control over the final results. You can also take the time to compose your sound to custom fit your audio to the video. Getting the timing right is much easier when you know exactly how long the video scene is. You can also get special sound effects to happen exactly when you want because you can watch and time scenes before adding the sound.

The biggest problem with adding sound at this stage is that it can mean adding another tape generation. If you have a VCR with audio dub facilities you can avoid this problem. Even if your VCR doesn't have audio dub facilities you may be able to avoid adding an extra generation of tape on some of the longer scenes

during animation or whilst playing the credits.

Adding Sounds During Playback. Trying to add sound or music effects during playback is not something you will do every day, but there are times when you will need to use this function. During a live stage performance or a demonstration, lecture or sports presentation you will probably have to do your own voice over or add your own music live, (while you're shooting). In these cases it is not so much a question of synchronizing the sound to the video but adjusting the video to the sound. Presentation software normally has the features that will let you customize your video to make them more interactive and even let you link audio to different scenes.

Audio Equipment

The differing range of available audio gear is mind boggling. You could spend as much money for

More Amiga & Video + Sound

your sound gear as you would for you video cameras but we don't want to do that do we? If you have some basic audio equipment you will already have the required set up needed to add new sound or voice overs to your video production. Next follows a list of the types of things you will need or you might want to get to make your video more professional.

First of all let's cover microphones. There are a lot of different microphones for differing situations and they come under many different categories. The most common microphone on the camcorder will most likely be the Omnidirectional; these mikes pick up sounds from all directions. Some higher priced and semi professional camcorders use Zoom mikes; these pick up the sound only from the direction that they are pointing.

As far as what type of mike to add to your camcorder depends entirely on your application and the frequency of its use. It will only take you a short time before you realize that the mike on your camcorder is not going to do all the things that you need. For voice overs you will need a mike on a stand.

A Unidirectional or Omnidirectional Dynamic mike with a table stand will work really well for this. This type of mike can also be used for interviews and some studio work as well. If you're into Wedding Videography you will need the use of Electret condenser lavalier microphones. These come with a clip on attachment so you can place the mike on the Bride or Groom or both and record all the intimate sound at the ceremony. These mikes are small enough to clip on

the lapel of a Groom's suit or the Bride's neckline.

The next piece of audio equipment you will need is a sound mixer. A mixer lets you blend together more than one audio source into one. The reason you need an audio mixer is that if you want to put music and sound effects as well as a voice over the top of the original sound from the master tape you have to mix both the sound from the video tape and the sound from another source. Now because the audio reproduction in video is not even close to the audio coming out of a CD player you won't have to pay big money for the equipment. You will need a mixer with enough inputs to accommodate all your input sources. The minimum I suggest is one with three inputs: one for the VCR playback, the next for voice overs and lastly the music or sound effects CDs.

Audio mixing is almost as complicated as video editing that's why there are sound recordists that get paid a lot of money for their audio mixing skills. You will probably want to do your sound mixing off-line. In other words, you will want to put the voice overs and even the music onto audio tape first, before you transfer them to video. Now this brings us to the next stage in the audio equipment line that you will most likely need.

The Audio tape deck.

Whilst you could try and co-ordinate all the sound sources at the same time it is much easier to pre record as much of the voice overs and sound effects as you can ahead of time. If you have ever tried to read just few lines of script out loud you will know that it is very difficult to get it right . A

tape recorder is essential for recording sound effects, music and voice overs. It doesn't have to be a top of the line deck; all it has to do is record and play back. Even though there is degradation in audio tape as in video copies as you dub from tape to tape the quality of TV sound is much lower that no one will notice unless there is some hiss or hum. You won't have to have a high quality sound system for your video applications but you want to maintain the best sound you can. If you want to check how the audio tracks will sound before you record to video you can feed it into the master VCR, put the VCR in record / pause so you can listen through your TV or monitor speaker.

This will give you a good idea how it will sound but you should do some real recording to video tape to hear the final results.

You are going to need a few extra cables for the audio side to connect everything together. As far as video and audio cables go, you can use video cables for audio but you shouldn't use audio cables for video. No matter what kind of cables you buy or make yourself, you should use shielded cables. It might not make much difference to your audio to use unshielded cables but it can make a huge difference to the video equipment that is next to it.

There are two main reasons for using computers in audio these being; music and sound effects. If you are a musician then you may already be interested in computer music.





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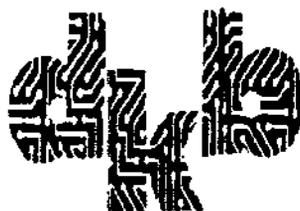
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T . A . E . N

The Amiga Education Network

By Basil Flinter

As Convener of The Amiga Education Network (TAEN), it gives me great pleasure to accept an invitation from AAG to contribute an article about TAEN and the Amiga in education. This is clearly a demonstration of AAG's desire to expand its efforts to revive the Amiga in Australia and, as such, is deserving of our support.

My association with Commodore goes back to 1982 (the heady days of the VIC-20!) when I became a Specialist and Education Dealer in the New England town of Armidale. And although the Amiga's official release date in Australia was scheduled for June 1986, my first contact with the Amiga was in March 1988, when Commodore was forced to rush in a number of NTSC Amiga 1000s for its dealer network in order to combat the grey market that had developed during the first few months of 1986 (and which was destabilising the market because of the exorbitant prices being asked by the unauthorised importers), such was the enthusiasm within Australia for this wonderful new computer!

While I have always been interested in all aspects of the Amiga, my special interest has been in the education field.

What is TAEN, and why does it exist?

The Amiga Education Network (TAEN) was established by me in response to Commodore Australia's demise (which preceded Commodore International's demise by a few months) as a means of supporting the Amiga platform in the schools that were using it, in the hope that there would be a speedy resolution to the survival of the Amiga and, as a consequence, to its survival in the critically important education market.

The purpose of The Amiga Education Network is to provide an Amiga-based global facility - open to all persons or organizations with an interest in the Amiga in the field of education in any country - through which information about the Amiga, relevant to that country's education, can be disseminated and exchanged.

Matters covered by The Amiga Education Network include -

Offering advice on the latest Amiga software (including upgrades) and hardware (including peripherals);

Offering advice on the use of any Amiga hardware or software, or on any Amiga matter appropriate to the enquirer's needs;

Supplying names of appropriate contacts;

Arranging for suitable demonstration of, and training in, Amiga education product;

Publication of regular TAEN newsletters;

Identifying areas of need, and advising developers and publishers about them; and, most importantly,

Promoting direct interaction (including an interchange of ideas on how to use the Amiga) among educational institutions and between individuals (teachers/lecturers/educationalists)

TAEN's slogan is: taen - the amiga education information highway

is There a Future for the Amiga in Australian Education?

Now that we know more about the machinations that led up to Commodore's eventual demise, I can come to terms with Commodore Australia's seemingly incredible decision to pull out of the education market just when the Amiga was beginning to make significant inroads into it. What could they do? The genius of Mehdi Ali had finally reached Australia!

But all that, we hope, is in the past, and I'm sure we all agree that we've had enough winging. Let's stop being negative, and start being positive. Let's promote

the Amiga's capabilities for all we're worth, but let's not be critical of other platforms or the efforts of Gateway 2000 and Amiga International to revive the Amiga, while we do so.

The Amiga is an ideal computer platform for the education market. But three years in the wilderness is a long time. What can we do to bring it back again in Australia?

Well, for starters, we need to persuade those publishers who once wrote software for Australian education - publishers like HC Software, Lascelles and Rush Software - to come back again and support the Amiga's revival. And we need to encourage those

schools who have Amigas to hang on to them. After all, aren't they still able to do what they were originally bought for?

So, even if you don't have a child at school, how about trying to find out whether schools in your area have Amigas, and then taking this magazine along and showing them this article? If it does nothing more than to inform the school of the existence of TAEN and how they can contact TAEN, or persuade it not to dispose of its Amigas, you will have taken a very positive first step towards the revival of the Amiga within the Australian education system.

Can you help your favourite

computer in any other way?

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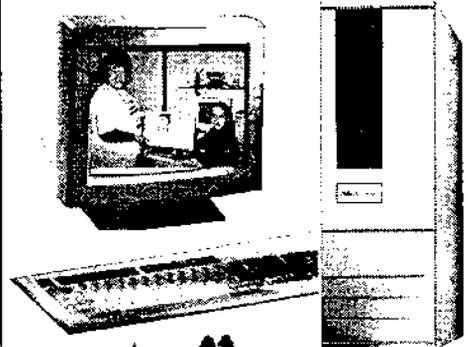
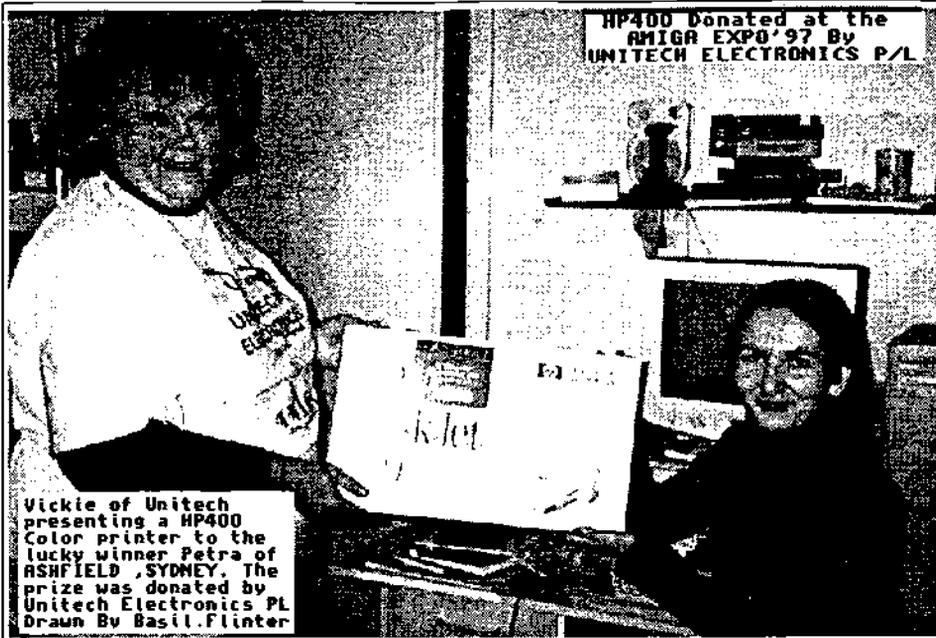
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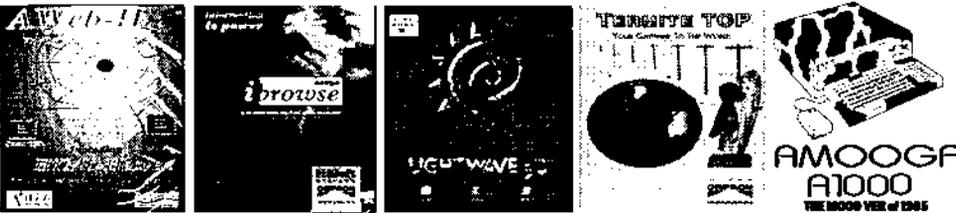
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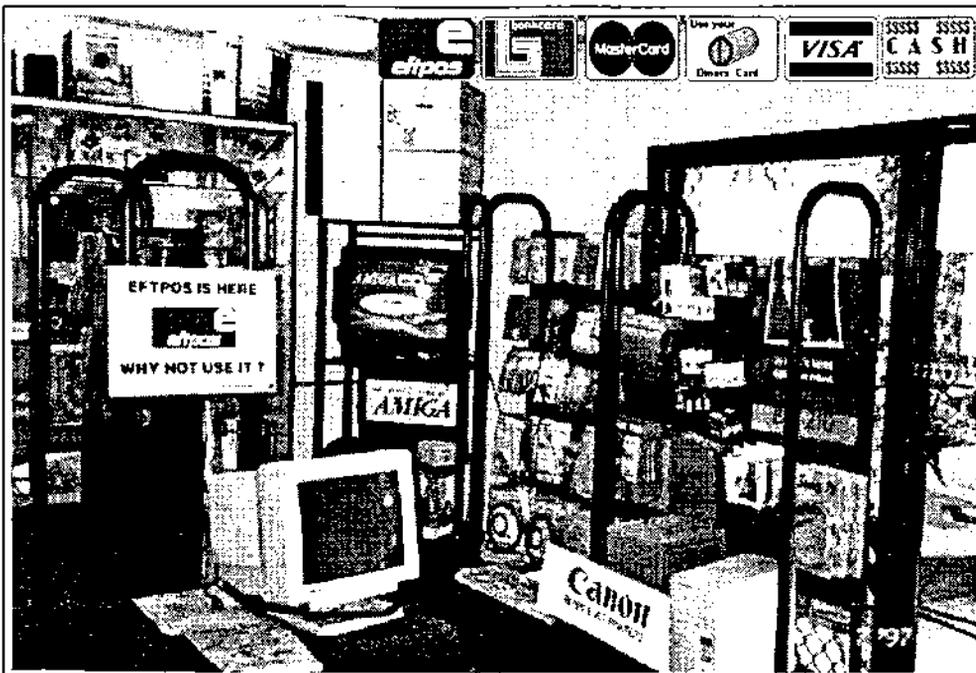
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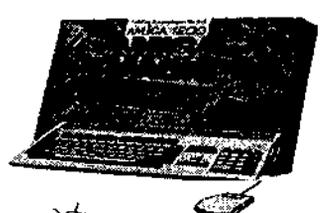
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RELAUNCH OF THE AMIGA - AUSTRALIAN AMIGA GATHERING '97

A MESSAGE TO THE AUSTRALIAN AMIGA COMMUNITY

Date: 29 June 1997

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome to the Australian Amiga Gathering '97, which represents the official relaunch of the Amiga in Australia. Unfortunately, due to other commitments, I am not able to be here today, as I would have liked to have been, especially as I always like to talk to fellow Amiga enthusiasts. I hope I can be present at the next Amiga Convention that takes place in Australia.

Many thanks to you, my friends, for your support, your understanding and your patience. It makes me very happy to know that our AMIGA community in Australia is excited about the new turn in the Amiga's fortunes, and looking forward to its future with interest.

As you are already aware, Gateway 2000 is a great home for our AMIGA, and with Gateway's spirit and financial resources, we can expect to have a bright future.

Although AMIGA International, Inc. is a subsidiary of Gateway 2000, and Gateway 2000 will provide resources to reinvigorate the AMfGA market place and keep AMIGA International a profitable subsidiary, it is not Gateway 2000's policy to mix AMIGA activities with those of Gateway 2000. So we have to be active on our own behalf. As I have already mentioned, in my London speech, three elements form the basis of my strategy. These are:

- (1) Supporting the existing AMIGA community.
- (2) Leveraging the existing AMfGA technology through broad licensing.
- (3) Assisting in developing new products based on open standards to the home computer and video/graphics market.

AMIGA International is exploring all possible products for the marketplace, including both hardware and software. We face a great challenge because it is not easy to make new products available in a short timeframe.

We are interested in working with companies such as Phase 5 to develop one unified AMIGA standard. We need potential partners here in Australia, and we are looking for such partners. We will open up the marketplace to cloning through licensing.

In Europe, I have just finalised a license contract with Micronik, to build A1200 Towers, with a wide range of options, including a 68060 processor. I believe there is still a strong following for the AMIGA system. Through licensing and new product development, there should be a strong future for the AMIGA.

AMIGA International's intention is to support the development community through concepts such as the "Open AMfGA INITIATIVE", and it will explore other concepts to bring developers over to the platform. We will explore the development of an OS upgrade, and will address the features and functions that are necessary.

I BELIEVE THAT THE BASIS OF SUCCESS IS TO WORK TOGETHER, WITH PARTNERS.

The AMIGA market cannot afford a split
WE MUST ALL MOVE TOGETHER IN ONE DIRECTION.
The Amiga's revival in Australia is important to me.

Please support AMIGA International, just as you supported the AMIGA in the past. Do not give up this wonderful computer's technology.

AMIGA is back for the Future.
Thank you very much for your attendance at the Australian Amiga Gathering '97. Enjoy the show, and the Amiga's return.

Petro Tyschtschenko
President
AMIGA International, Inc.



The Australian Amiga Gathering '97

Amiga International

AAG '97 Show Representative's

Official Report

The Australian Amiga Gathering '97 (AAG '97) was held on the weekend of 28 and 29 June, 1997 at the Kensington Exhibition Centre of The Sydney Showground.

AAG '97 was the brainchild of Michael Burak, editor of the magazine Australian Amiga Gazette (hence the AAG title for the show), "a grassroots publication created for the purpose of keeping the Amiga dream alive in Australia and beyond."

Despite the cold and wet conditions of a Sydney winter's day, and the limited exposure the show was able to receive, nearly 1000 people (that is, paying customers) attended the show, a very creditable result. One which Michael, and his hard-working team, must surely be proud of.

Although it was small in size, I believe AAG '97 will provide the needed kickstart that the Australian Amiga community has been waiting for. It is only a pity, according to many with whom I spoke, that the show organisers did not receive any support from Megatron, currently AI's only officially recognised Australian distributor. Those exhibitors who did support the show had nothing but praise for the weekend, and took full advantage of the special

enclosure ('The Tent') which was provided for the purpose of presentations, seminars, group discussions, prize contests, etc.

AAG '97 was also used as the vehicle for the official relaunch of the Amiga in Australia and, as such, a statement by AI's President, Petro Tyschtschenko was read at the show on both days to an appreciative audience. My personal reaction to the statement was the importance of two things. First, that it is time to stop being negative about the Amiga and AI's efforts, and start being positive - not only here in Australia, but everywhere. And second, we must all (and this means the whole Amiga community; the users as well as the industry) change our attitude from one of "What can Gateway 2000/AI do for me?" to one of "What can I do for the Amiga?"

Because AAG '97 did represent the official relaunch of the Amiga in Australia, and because of the enthusiasm generated by the show, I believe an appropriate slogan for Australia would be:

**"The comeback has started.
Keep the momentum going!"**

The following is a brief description of the exhibitors, presented in alphabetical order:

• Amadeus Computers -
One of the few dedicated Amiga dealers still around, Amadeus

Computers is situated just outside Sydney. Included in its stand were a range of products from Digita and Cloanto, for both of whom Amadeus is official distributor in Australia.

• Amiga Genius -

This Amiga dealer came from Newcastle, considered by Australians to be fairly close, as it is only about 145km (90 miles) north of Sydney. It was the only stand offering the Graffiti card (which can be used on any Amiga), but it was also demonstrating the Siamese System and Shapeshifter.

• Australian Amiga Gazette (AAG)

As organisers of the show, the AA Gazette's stand (manned mainly by Michael Michael Gruber, and Paul and Ann Graham) provided all the administrative support that was needed during the show, promoted the Gazette, ran a very successful Shareware Registration Booth, offered a range of useful product, including Greg Wall's very successful A1200 tutorial videos (though now aging), and donated space to the ICOA, various members of which (notably Guy Nathan and Paul Morabito) could be seen there at different times during the show.

• Computa Magic -

Another mainstay of the Australian dealers still committed to the Amiga, Melbourne-based Computa Magic's owners, Vince

Continued on next page 

Amiga International AAG '97 Show Representative's Official Report Continued

and Kerrie Morton, travelled a few hundred kilometres to support the show. It was commitment like this (and that shown by others who travelled great distances to be present) that, I believe, will make all the difference to the Amiga's revival in Australia. Distributors represented by Computa Magic include DKB, Golden Image and ProDAD. It also distributes the Bio-Con flicker fixer, and was holding talks with UK-based Power Computing with a view to representing them here.

• GP Software -

Publishers of that great Amiga utility, Directory Opus, GP Software's stand was manned by Greg Perry (GP himself) and Jonathon Potter, both of whom had travelled all the way from Brisbane, Queensland, some 800km (or 500 miles) to the north. Focussing on Opus 5.5 and Opus Magellan Opus 5.6, they soon dispelled any suggestion (voiced in some magazines) that Directory Opus has become too complax. Their enthusiasm for this great product was contagious, and clearly appreciated by the constant stream of people who came to talk to them, many of whom (myself included) walked away wearing their very smart Directory Opus T-shirts.

• GSoft -

Another long distance exhibitor (approximately 1200km, or 750 miles, as the crow flies), long time supporter of the Australian Amiga community and one-time President of the now defunct Australian Amiga Developers Association (AADA), Steve Wemyss and his family showed their continuing commitment by

travelling all the way from Adelaide, capital of the State of South Australia. Specialising in custom multimedia solutions, especially for Amiga computer systems, GSoft is the exclusive Australian distributor for Micronik Infinity Towers, ELSAT (ProGrab) digitisers, Phase 5 products, MIAMI and, for improved printer output, Studio II. Helping out on the stand was Arnie Robbins (Software Buyers Service) from Melbourne, who was representing AWeb. Covered with AWeb stickers, and wearing a large black hat of the 'Mad Hatter' type, Arnie was probably the most colourful character at the show.

• Power Computing -

Winner of the travel stakes, "by a country mile", was Tony Ianiri, Director of UK-based Power Computing. Tony felt he should support the many Australian users who have been buying from him but, faced with the problem of customs, only brought in small items (mainly A1200 accelerators and CD-ROM games) which he felt he could either sell at the show or leave with local dealers who, deprived of new product for so long, were more than happy to take them. The Australian Amiga scene needs people like Tony. I hope he enjoyed his planned short holiday in Australia after the show.

• RMF -

Resource Management Force, a Sydney-based company and makers of the QuickNet 'peer to peer' network system designed specifically for the Amiga (all models including the A500 and CO32), was represented by Norman Pakes. QuickNet will

allow an unlimited number of Amigas to be connected together, as it utilises standard EtherNet cabling that may have repeaters and boosters as required, although a network of 20-30 computers is possible without any repeaters or boosters. Because of the software in a ROM on the card, a particularly useful feature of QuickNet is that it allows a computer that is 'diskless' to boot from another computer's hard disk drive somewhere on the network. This could make for great economy in the classroom situation.

• St Johns Park High School -

Led by their Visual Arts Head Teacher, Mrs Lyn Thomas, a number of students from this school had willingly given up their weekend (and part of their school holidays) to demonstrate, on half dozen or so Amigas, various aspects of their school's Film and Video Course. At a time when most schools in Australia are disposing of their Amigas, it was gratifying to learn that St Johns Park was intending to increase the number of Amigas they have. The hard work and enthusiasm shown by the students and their teachers at the show did earn the school a new piece of equipment - an HP colour printer - presented to them at the end of the show by UniTech Electronics. St Johns Park High School, and their sponsors, were kind enough to allow me, as Convenor of The Amiga Education Network (TAEN), to use their stand as a point of contact with those attending the show. As TAEN is a non-profit organization which I run

Continued on page  36

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World Wide Web

by Guy Nathan

Welcome to the World Wide Web review column.

For those who missed the last column, we are providing you with a look at the best of what's out there on the World Wide Web. We will concentrate on sites with good content and design, as well as (in upcoming issues) a look at support sites for well-known Amiga products.

This month we cover two excellent Amiga web sites, Amiga Alley and the Amiga Flame.

Both are sites which are operated by individuals, yet are as popular, if not more so than commercial Amiga sites.

AmigaAlley:

(<http://www.znet.com/~colin/hardware.html>)

This web site is not run by any organisation, but by one man in the USA. It is through his hard work and effort that he has produced a very informative and refreshing web page.

His 'Almost Daily Fishwrap' section is an on-line Web Amiga newspaper. In addition, his web site also offers support for ShapeShifter, Hardware Hacks, GIF Animations (The web format for animations), and other subjects that interest him..

The design of this site is very well laid out, and even though it uses frames (something often implemented in web sites, but for all the wrong reasons), it uses

them well and provides for easy navigation of the web site.

This web site doesn't use a lot of HiRes rendered images, which is to its advantage. All of its graphics are simple yet impressive and don't detract from where the attention should go. For viewing this web site you should have a Frames capable browser, which means IBrowse 1.10+, VoyagerNG 2.10+, AWeb 3+, or the up and coming web browsers like WebCruiser. Amiga Alley is also viewable with Lynx.

It is worth noting that this web site is the only non-CUCUG site featured on the Amiga Web Directories quick-link list.

Rating: 8.5/10

The following is an interview with creator of the Amiga Alley site Colin Thompson.

Q: Colin, How long have you had a web site for?

Colin: About two years

Q: What advice would you give to those who wish to create their own Amiga web pages?

Colin: Pick a subject and explore it. Keep the graphics to a minimum, and remember that your page may be viewed on an 8 color web browser. Simple idea is good.

Q: Do you find the job of maintaining a web page worthwhile?

Colin: Oh yes. I am a writer. I have the urge to create. The web gives me an outlet to express myself. I love the immediacy that the web offers.

Q: As a writer, do you often put much of your own articles onto your web page, or do you source a lot of your articles externally?

Colin: When I began the Amiga Alley site, I used my own articles exclusively. Now, however, I spend too much time maintaining the site to write many of my own articles. Hence I publish articles written by others. The goal is to make the site interesting.

Q: Ok, What programs do you use when creating and maintaining your web site?

Colin: HTML purists will love this: I use an old text editor, Annotate to write the code. It's all done by hand. Graphics are done with Personal Paint 7.1, Image Studio, and GIF Toolkit.

Q: If you had to name one thing you hated in certain web sites, what would it be, and what would you recommend in place of it?

Colin: Only one thing? Ok, that would have to be ugly background images. If the text cannot be read, what's the point? My recommendation is to use a background color, not an image. If you feel the urge to use a background image, make sure it compliments the color and size of the text.

Q: Is there anything else you wish to tell us about your web site?

Colin: When I began the site, I wanted to simply post a series of pages that held information and links to subjects that interested me. Gradually the number of these pages grew. Eventually I unified these pages under one banner, which I called Amiga Alley.

That concept worked for a long time. Eventually I noticed my fledgling "News" page was getting the lion's share of the hits.

I decided to expand that page, concentrating on the news. The number of hits kept rising, so I knew I was putting out interesting information.

Eventually I reorganized the News page into the Almost Daily Fishwrap. This has been a successful change. The Fishwrap gets 2000 hits a day now.

The Amiga Alley pages are still there, and I maintain them daily, but I have reorganized them so they have become part of the normal content of the Fishwrap. "Amiga Alley" will eventually disappear.

Q: What format do you recommend when laying out your web pages?

Colin: I have experimented for a long time with a format that is appropriate for a daily newspaper. I eventually settled on the frames format I now use. I waited to implement frames until every Amigan can get a free, demo frames browser. This was a big change and the public has responded favorably.

Now that frames are used, I can track each news item. When an

article's popularity falls off, I delete it. This keeps the page lean and mean.

Of course there were a few people who told me they did not like frames, but they were very few, so I continued.

I think I have found my niche in the web. A daily Amiga newspaper seems popular with many people. I get a lot of positive email. This keeps me going.

Q: In conclusion, summarise for the readers what your web site can offer those who choose to visit it on both a once off or regular basis?

Colin: The Fishwrap is the main draw. I like to post breaking news stories. I am not interested in "making the news", I simply want to report it.

Besides the Fishwrap, I offer pages that specialize in ShapeShifter, Hardware hacks, GifAnims, Local San Diego resources, and my personal pages. I am a cat person, so I publish lots of pictures of my cats.

Thankyou very much for your time Colin, and all the best with your web site in the future.

Amiga Flame:

(<http://www.d-n-a.net/users/dnetPwic/amiflame.htm>)

This site is another Amiga web site also maintained by a single Amiga enthusiast from the United Kingdom. This site, in my opinion is the number one resource for Amiga games release information and Amiga games news.

The Amiga Flame offers news on: Amiga games news, future Amiga CD-ROM game release schedule,

future Amiga game (both disk and CD-ROM) release schedule, latest games released, game demo of the month (as well as keeping all previous reviews online), game reviews, and released games from 1996 and 1997 so far for the Amiga.

In addition, the Flame offers advice for game developers on how to get their games published. All games and game demos reviewed include in-game screenshots, usually in the form of GIFs or GIF Animations. This site is mirrored in the UK and the US.

<http://www.d-n-a.net/users/dnetPwic/amiflame.htm>
<http://www.geocities.com/~amigafiamel/>

Due to the graphic content of these pages, it can take quite a while to download. However, the HTML design used on these web pages allow even IBrowse 1.02, or VoyagerNG to display them perfectly well.

A considerable number of GIF Animations are used, as well as high resolution background images and high resolution screen shots from games. This site benefits from being viewed with atleast 256 colours (and more if running on a system which has a Graphics Board).

Rating: 7.5/10

In the next issue I plan to cover a number of sites. The Pure Amiga, the a|News, and the No Amiga To Waste web site.

Til next month, happy webbing! For all inquires or comments about this column, e-mail me at: cyberwlf@wr.com.au
Guy Nathan.



The Jay Miner Society

Part One

by Michael Gruber

This is a three part article on the Jay Miner Society and their Developer Conference Presentation.

Jay Miner, whom the society is named after, is known as the Father of AMIGA. Mr Miner got the AMIGA off the ground through hard work and forming the original company to develop the AMIGA. Jay Miner also engineered the AGNUS chip which is the heart of the AMIGA. Jay's dog Mitchy has his place in history too. That is Mitchy's paw-print which graces the inside of AMIGA 1000 cases.

The Industry Council Open Amiga Initiative Presentation was given at QMW Amiga Society's developer conference on 17th May 1997.

1. A brief history of the Second Wind mailing list, the ARise mailing list, the Jay Miner Society for the Advancement of Personal Computing, and the Industry Council / Open Amiga initiative.

Some time during the middle of 1996, the dark period of the Amiga, a few noted Amiga personalities, Giorgio Gomelsky, Steve Bowie, Erich Keser and Skal Loret came together to create a forum, Second Wind, where serious Amiga users could talk about their worries, concerns, fears, hopes and dreams. The idea was to see if the Amiga community as a whole could come up

with an idea, a plan, a strategy to pull the platform back from the brink.

The first step was the creation of a second forum, called ARise, a private mailing list to which only Amiga veterans and industry notables were invited. Whilst the users toiled on Second Wind, generating noise and many heated arguments, the ARise list was a more serious concern, allowing for a deeper level of informed analysis and debate.

The result of the Second Wind forum has been the creation of the Jay Miner Society for the Advancement of Personal Computing - the JMS for short - which is soon to come into being as a legal entity. The purpose of the JMS is to further the spirit of the Amiga in any way that it can, pushing the Amiga community forwards through increased public awareness, the recommendation of standards and the concentration and distribution of the community's resources throughout the community, and also pulling it forward by demanding new products, channelling user feedback and suggestions in the most effective manner, looking into the future across all platforms and trying to create a vision, a path for the short, the medium and the long term.

The JMS will be a user group but unlike most existing groups, which operate on a micro level, supporting the Amiga in one locality, the JMS will operate at the macro level, seeking to become a nexus,

a meeting point for Amiga users all around the world, enabling the power, passion, talents and knowledge of the community to be focused and applied. Hopefully it will provide a service to the many excellent user groups already out there and, in return, the JMS will be able to call upon the locally empowered groups to assist the Society in its work. The JMS will also be pro-active. It will not just sit back and respond to events; rather it will go out and create events.

This will be done through the creation of a virtual Amiga city on the Internet, allowing for on line discussions, debates and meetings. These will provide the impetus for the creation of projects, with teams of people working on specific problems such as the preparation of discussion papers, research into up-and-coming technologies and, where no Amiga developer is active, the writing of software itself - however, this would only be a last resort - rather we hope to produce recommendations and perhaps logical designs for products and applications we require in order to make our virtual community a reality.

We are aware as users that the user community has lost some of the support, sympathy and respect that it once had with the developers. Some of this has been down to simple over-exuberance but most has arisen out of the sense of frustration and betrayal that both sides have felt as the platform has been tortured

by events and figures beyond our control.

With the JMS we are hoping to rebuild that bridge once again. We wish to create a vast set of funnels, wide at one end where the users can shout, rant, create and brainstorm and then narrowing into a central User-Developer Liaison committee at the other end, a mechanism for distilling out of the chaos and passion all the gems of information that would be most helpful to developers. We wish to protect the developers from the unnecessary whilst guaranteeing that when users have good ideas, suggestions and recommendations they are not lost in the flames.

The first project that the JMS has sponsored is the Industry Council and Open Amiga working group. This was the culmination of nine months of debate and discussion within the Arise mailing list; a project based upon the two most promising ideas of the list, the industry Council and the Open Amiga. The project consisted of several rounds of directed discussions on IRC over a month-long period, each round distilling the wisdom of the previous rounds and building upon that wisdom until it was decided that the working group had reached its goal - a sustainable strategy for the rebirth of the Amiga.

2. An analysis of the current Amiga platform.

Here's the case against the Amiga:

- There's a shrinking user base.
- Developer support is declining.
- The primary Operating System and the Amiga hardware are currently frozen.
- Primary marketing is dwindling, and there's a consequent loss of visibility for the platform.
- The 680x0 processor family has

no future.

- There's no central platform development strategy. Consequently there's been some disintegration of the community with pro-PiOS, pro-Phase-5, pro-680x0 'fundamentalists' appearing.

Now, the case for the Amiga:

- it still has a unique quality of developers and users.
- There is continued independent development of hardware and software.
- The community, and thus the market, remains in the low hundreds of thousands.
- It now has a new owner with an apparently agreeable philosophy.
- The Amiga vision and spirit are a powerful force.
- There's continuing disquiet and opposition to the status quo among personal computer users, which Microsoft, Intel and Apple are failing to respond to.

The worst-case scenario is that the Amiga community splits into the three aforementioned groups, with little or no inter-operability between their chosen platforms, each requiring a separate porting of an application - the community would shatter into small pieces competing against each other and the Amiga would become nothing more than a hobbyist's machine in a gradually shrinking niche. A sad ending for what was and still can be the best computer on the planet. An ending that none of us want.

We looked at the current and future state of the world's personal computing industry, and identified these trends:

- A movement towards open standards, distributed objects, and software that works together and works anywhere.
- Cheaper, yet more powerful machines to run more complex applications.
- The rise of the web.

- Convergence of electronic systems, with TV, video, music, gaming, telephony, home security, and even domestic appliances being combined to some extent.

- A rise in general computer-awareness and the demand for more friendly, more simple interfaces specifically tailored to the various groups, such as families, business, and SOHO (Small Office/Home Office).
- An increased speed of change in software, resulting in a need for rapid prototyping, development, adoption and implementation.
- The increasing dominance of Windows NT in the business market and particularly in what was formerly considered to be the Unix market.
- Continued vocal opposition to Wintel among users.

With these assessments, we began the process of developing the industry Council and Open Amiga ideas. We didn't just want to produce a plan that would kick-start the Amiga only to possibly see it founder in a few months or years. We wanted to produce a strategy which would provide for the creation of a core structure around which Amiga development could be dynamic, sustainable and secure. We now believe that we have achieved what we set out to do.

END OF PART 1

Jay Miner Society: www.jms.org
Fleecy Moss:
fleecy@netreach.net



Final Writer Version 5

Review

by Grant Regan

Over the years, SoftWood's flagship package, Final Writer has evolved to become a very accomplished and professional word-processing package rivalling many of the supreme word-processing packages on the PC for power and features, and arguably exceeding them in terms of user-friendliness.

Through regular updates, Final Writer has maintained its position as one of the two tremendously powerful word-processors available on the Amiga today; the other being Digita's Wordworth (Haage and Partner's imminent release of their new word-processing package should certainly bring an interesting dimension to this battle).

Locked in a stiff yet healthy competition, these two packages have largely kept abreast of one another in terms of features but employ entirely different approaches. The differences in approach have led to a strict division of loyalties amongst Amigans between the two packages. Personally, my preference lies with SoftWood products, however, I do wish to say at this point that Digita's products are a credit to their developers, being extremely professional, powerful, and intuitive products. This review concerns Final Writer 5.05 alone. With the imminent release of Final Writer 97 (why do we feel it necessary to join the bandwagon) and Haage and Partner's new

package, a comparative review may be possible in the near future.

REQUIREMENTS

Compared to Gothic, resource hungry monstrosities found on the PC, we in the Amiga fraternity are blessed with relatively light weight and easy to use word-processors. Final Writer 5.05, despite a wealth of new features maintains that tradition. Certainly the minimum requirements have tended to creep up with each release however, generally these requirements have reflected the evolution of what is the 'average' Amiga. Today, the 'average' Amiga does appear to have 2.5 to 3mb of RAM, a hard-drive, and AmigaOS 2.0 or higher. Final Writer has these as its minimum requirements although AmigaOS 2.1 or higher is required to utilise CompuGraphic fonts, and AmigaOS 3.0 or higher is required to use Datatypes.

However, SoftWood hasn't forgotten all you 'baby' Amiga users however, as a 'lite' version is also available. Unfortunately a review copy was unavailable at the time of writing.

Final Writer 5.05 was tested on my Amiga 4000 which has a 25mhz 68040 processor, AmigaOS 3.0, and 14 mb of RAM. On such a system Final Writer performed quickly and flawlessly.

INSTALLATION

Final Writer comes on 11 disks. A complete installation consumes about 11 mb of Hard-Drive space. The installer provides the option of not installing the 100 pieces of clipart, without which, the program consumes approximately 6 mb of space.

Installation is a painless procedure as Final Writer uses the standard Amiga installer routine. All directories and files are installed to the one location. One option I would like to see, however trivial, is the option of Magic Workbench icons. Love them or loathe them they have nonetheless, become the de-facto standard icon system on the Amiga.

THE INTERFACE

Upon loading Final Writer one is immediately struck by its uncluttered appearance and ostensibly intuitive layout. Certainly, Final Writer could stand as a lesson to Microsoft with their preference for 'boatware', and their passion for creating complex and convoluted interfaces (Word being the crowning example).

Appearance however, belies performance as Final Writer for all its apparent simplicity and transparency to the user is a tremendously comprehensive and powerful package as I will outline shortly.

Upon loading one is also struck by the ingenious card-file type

tabs located along the top and bottom of the page which provide quick and easy access to the required page or section such as chapter, bibliography, and index (see image). The use of card-file tabs is carried further throughout the program as preference menus utilise this system to provide clean and compact requesters. These card-file tabs assist in providing Final Writer with an intuitively organised and easily accessible system of functions and preferences which minimise the number of layers and the actions required to utilise a particular feature or perform a function.

The preferences and the functions are accessible from either the menus, through Arexx macros, or through the button bank which is a completely customisable strip of icons. The button bank, through the 'view' preferences requester may be positioned on any of the sides of the screen or as a floating toolbar. Moreover, Final Writer allows the user to establish as many or as few button banks as necessary and have complete control over the functions assigned to the icons in the button bank through a very simple 'drag-and-drop' method.

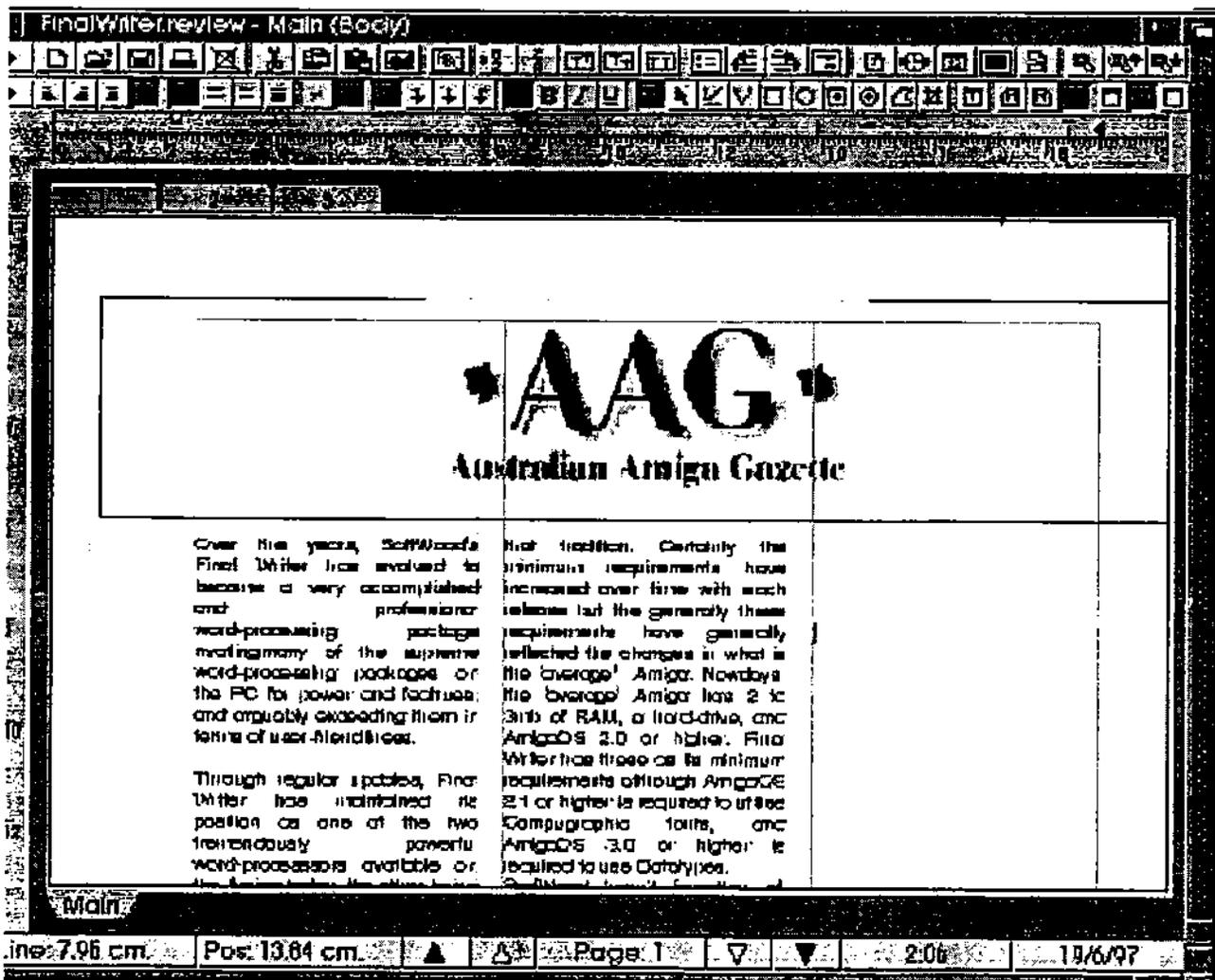
For those of us who find that a mouse driven interface inhibits

speed, Final Writer also provides an extensive range of keyboard short-cuts.

My only gripe relating to the interface are that the non-standard cycle gadgets are clumsy. SoftWood should have incorporated the excellent freely distributable Cycle-To-Menu Workbench patch which creates seamless, easy-to-use, and attractive pop-up cycle menus.

WHADDYA GET?

Final Writer 5.05 incorporates a considerable number of improvements and inclusions, some of them well and truly overdue. The first of these is the use of



Final Writer Version 5 Review

Continued

Datatypes for image loading. Previously, Final Writer could only import IFF/ILBM graphics. Now with Final Writer 5.05, as long as your system uses AmigaOS 3.x and as long as you have the appropriate Datatype, you can import the required graphic.

Other overdue improvements are the support for preloading of fonts and the support for a system called RTF (Rich Text Format) which allows the user to import documents produced on any word-processing package. Additionally, there is now the support for Tables, or in other words, statistical information presented visually in rows and columns. At present, Final Writer's Tables feature only supports the importation of data from SoftWood's database program, Final Data.

A tremendously useful feature for those who use and edit HTML documents (Hypertext Markup Language, a script which is used in the construction of Web pages on the Internet) is the inclusion of HTML support. Final Writer can now be used to create, edit, load and save HTML documents, and with the support for Datatypes, it allows for the embedding on popular Web graphics formats such as GIF and JPEG. Admittedly, Final Writer lacks many of the features associated with dedicated web-page construction software, the feature is nonetheless an impressive and highly useful addition to Final Writer.

For the typist in a hurry, Final Writer incorporates the Auto Correct system; a system which

performs corrections as you type for commonly misspelt or mistyped words. The Auto Correct system allows you to pre-define those words which you want corrected through a preferences requester. The system is quick and unobtrusive.

For those who are creating multiple copies of a document with differing details, Final Writer 5.05 now incorporates the ability to use an existing document as a style template. Additionally, Final Writer 5.05 allow the user to create or use existing 'style' templates or preference for a document. This feature provides a method of setting a document's style without having to manually adjust each paragraph's settings.

Lastly, Final Writer 5.05 now includes the option of using ASL requesters (Amiga Standard Library) requesters over Final Writer's custom requesters. A minor addition perhaps, but one which many users would welcome.

PERFORMANCE

In typing and general operation, Final Writer performs quickly: still quicker than Wordworth which does have a tendency to lag behind the typist. Final Writer's new Auto Correct feature amends typing errors unobtrusively and without causing any significant delay and text, document, and paragraph manipulation performs equally quickly.

In spell correction and in searching for synonyms, again Final Writer is quick considering its

144,000 word speller and its 1.4 million word thesaurus. The Grammar checker, a feature of word-processors which I have always regarded as having negligible practicality, does provide some useful suggestions and also performs relatively quickly.

The proof of the pudding is in the eating as some boring home-spun philosopher once said and this is certainly true of a word-processor. How well does Final Writer print your precious document? Well, Final Writer performs very well in this category as SoftWood have always been renown for the quality of the printed document produced from their products. The print quality from Final Writer is exceptionally high, even on a lowly 9-pin dot matrix printer. Indeed, one could be mistaken for believing at a glance that the document was produced on an ink-jet printer. Final Writer performs very well with the standard printer drivers, and the quality improves tremendously with driver systems such as Wolf Faust's Studio II system. Final Writer's use of outline fonts certainly contribute to the printing quality, however, on the down side, Final Writer can be slow in the printing process.

MANUAL

The professionalism of Final Writer is carried on through to the manual. Often, Amiga users had been forced to accept sub-standard documentation for their software. The manual that comes with Final Writer is professionally laid out and structured using large easy to read fonts in well-defined

sections and paragraphs. All major points are accompanied by clear, well labeled images and diagrams. SoftWood claim that the manual was produced on Final Writer: this in itself is a worthy testament to the professionalism and power of the program.

SoftWood have divided the manual into clear sections which reflect the structure of the program itself. The sections progress from the introduction and installation to features for the advanced users such as Arexx support.

The index and contents pages are thorough and accurate, and the towards the rear of the manual there are a series of easy reference sections which provide an graphical overviews of the program's primary features such as fonts, menus, and clipart.

LIMITATIONS AND FLAWS

Murphy, in his many periods or inebriated lucidity, is reported to have once said that a program either has bugs or is obsolete. This is certainly true of Final Writer. No program is perfect, and

the regular updates and improvements to Final Writer demonstrate that SoftWood adhere to this philosophy.

Final Writer does appear to have a problem with that infamous Workbench kludge, MagicMenus. On any version of MagicMenus prior to version 2.15, the menus will fail to work altogether. MagicMenus 2.15 does appear to work, although I did experience one strange lock up of my system which I suspect is attributable to MagicMenus rather than Final Writer.

One flaw I have noticed with Final Writer itself is when using justification and columns, the last character of the final word on a line does tend to disappear from the screen, however, this in no way affects printing.

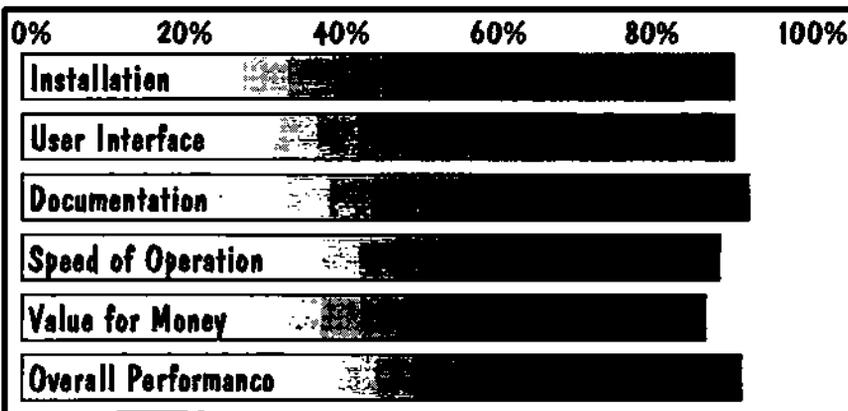
With regards, to omissions, Final Writer lacks the text manipulation features of a word-processor like Wordworth. Final Writer is unable to create warped text effects at least without a cumbersome and crude third party Arexx script.

THE LAST WORD

Final Writer is a well crafted and professional program throughout, and a testament to its developer's SoftWood, who have struck by the Amiga, creating quality products which compare more than favourably with their PC counterparts. A clean, intuitive interface, speedy operation and performance, and high quality finished product are how I would summarize Final Writer's good points. On the negative side, and there are few negatives, are the lack of some important features and a few minor bugs. Of course, it should be interesting to see Final Writer 97, and the improvements that this program will entail.

- Installation 90%
- User Interface 90%
- Documentation 93%
- Speed of operation 88%
- Value for money 85%
- Overall performance 90%

Dist by Quasar distribution
 Made by SoftWood
 Hware needed 3meg H/Drive
 Sware needed Wb 2.0 or greater
 Retail Price \$179



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DISTRIBUTED BY	Quasar Distribution
HWARE NEEDED	3Meg Ram/HDrive
SWARE NEEDED	Wb2.0 or greater
RETAIL PRICE	\$179.00
OVERALL RATING	90%

THE BEST OF PUBLIC DOMAIN

BY DANIEL HAJDUK

THE BEST OF PUBLIC DOMAIN IS DEDICATED TO PROMOTING EXCEPTIONAL PUBLIC DOMAIN AND SHAREWARE PROGRAMS.

EACH MONTH WE WILL PRESENT A VARIETY OF PROGRAMS, UTILITIES AND ADD-ONS COVERING A WIDE RANGE OF APPLICATIONS.

EACH PROGRAM SELECTED IS THE BEST IN ITS AREA AND ENHANCES AMIGA'S EXCELLENT WORKBENCH.

ScreenInWindow

ScreenInWindow is a small commodity program that displays part of a screen in a window on another screen. The purpose of this program is to allow you to work on one screen and monitor what is happening on another.

For example if you wish to monitor your incoming mail whilst typing in a word processor, you can have ScreenInWindow displaying your mail retrieving program in a small window on your word processing screen. By using ScreenInWindow you will be able to monitor what is happening on your word processing screen without continuously switching screens to see what is happening. The window is fully sizable and has scroll bars so you can scroll through the window.

There are some parameters with the program which will allow you to control how the program functions. The two most common will be *HomeScreen* which allows you to choose which screen you want the window to appear on and *InactiveUpdateRate* which allows you to set the update rate for the window. The Amiga Guide file included will tell you how to set up the parameters that are

available. Unfortunately the archive contents did not come with an installer script so you will have to install ScreenInWindow manually to the destination of your choice.

The only set back to ScreenInWindow is that it can clutter up the screen that you are working on, thus making it difficult to work with. ScreenInWindow is an interesting utility, and will give you an interesting perspective at the way in which you view your screens.

Programmed By: Thomas Igracki
Available From: Aminet
Requirements: N/A

ScreenTAB V3.0

ScreenTAB is a commodity program which lets your Amiga emulate the well known "Alt+Tab" feature of MS Windows. Originally ScreenTAB only performed this one function however with the release of version 3.0, the creator has added some extra features to the commodity. These new features include the addition of a task bar, which is very similar to the one in Windows95, and a Windows95 style startbutton, which can make using the Workbench a lot faster and easier.

With ScreenTAB it is possible to use some or all of the features of the program. If you wish, you can disable the task bar and startbutton features, and only have the ScreenTAB feature functioning. Should you choose to have the StartButton feature functioning you will first be required to set up what programs will appear in the startbutton list.

When setting up the startbutton programs, you will have the option to choose either a Workbench or CLI program. You can set priorities for the program, and attach icon images to each of the items. There is an archive included that has a whole series of images to choose from or alternatively you select your own image.

One excellent feature of ScreenTAB is the plugin modules. These plugin modules can be used to extend the functionality of the ScreenTAB. A plugin module is an external program (more commonly known as a shared library) which can communicate with ScreenTAB over a defined interface. Some plugin modules come with the package. These include *COMMODITIES*, which works similar to the exchange program, *WINDOWS*, which gives you even more

possibilities for switching screens and SYSTOOLS which adds routines to flush your memory and safely reboot your machine.

ScreenTAB must be installed onto your hard drive before you can use it. There is an Amiga Guide file included, which will tell you how to set up and utilise the performance of ScreenTAB to suit your needs. The modest amount of RAM that is required to run ScreenTAB is a small price to pay for a program which offers speed and ease of use. ScreenTAB will modernise your Amiga's Workbench, and ensure its capability of keeping pace with more modern operating environments.

Programmed By: Michael Link
Available From: Aminet or PD libraries
Requirements: Workbench 2.04+ & MUI 3.6+

ABackup

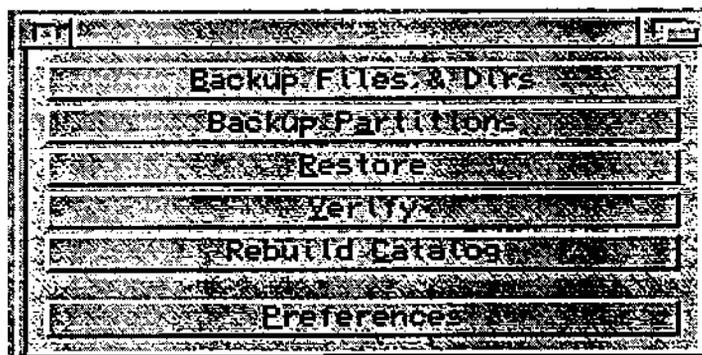
If you're the sort of person who values the data on your computer, but has never performed a backup, the following program will be an essential addition to your range of utilities to have. ABackup is a comprehensive hard drive backup utility. The best thing about ABackup is that it offers a large list of detailed options which will allow you to perform your backups in the most convenient way.

With ABackup it is possible to backup whole partitions or just individual files or directories. ABackup extends its ability to not only Amiga DOS partitions or files, but also non Amiga DOS partitions. This means that it is possible to backup your Unix or Mac partitions that are present

on your system.

ABackup offers both full and selective operations. The selective operation will ensure that all new information can be added to an existing backup file without you enduring to do an entire backup. ABackup supports file compression methods during Backups, with most file compression modes supported. You can set up data encryption for your backups, so any security issues can be taken care of. Backup data can be stored on several storage mediums such as, hard drives, floppy disks, and tape drives. There is a preferences screen full of options that can be set up, with a preferences option for every feature of the program.

impressive about ABackup is the four available operational modes. The default method is the *Interactive with intuition interface*. This makes the program operate as normal using the mouse, keyboard and GUI. The second option is *Automatic with intuition interface*, which allows you to make a project icon. This mode is mostly used if you perform the same operations frequently and wish to have them automated. The third mode is *Interactive with shell interface*, which allows you to use ABackup as a file archiver with a program such as LHA. The last mode is *Automatic with shell interface*, which is useful if you wish to have your backup process performed automatically.



A list of the powerful ABackup features, in the simple and easy to use interface.

The features of this program are quite definitive; there is even an option to print disk labels for you so you know what each backup disk contains.

There is an option which will give you a summary and include an estimated time size and amount of low density floppy disks you will require to do the backup.

ABackup can be installed onto your hard drive. The archive includes an Amiga Guide File.

One feature that is most

Overall ABackup is a comprehensive backup utility which has many options. The Graphical User interface is well designed and ensures that the program is easy to use and understand.

Programmed By: Dennis Gouneile and Reza Eighazi
Available From: Aminet and most public domain sites
Requirements: Any Amiga with 1 meg ram and Kickstart v37+

on a voluntary basis, this gesture was greatly appreciated by me.

• **TechMedia -**

Represented by its principal, Norman Cantrelli, and ably assisted by Gus, TechMedia describes its business as "Digital Media Products and Productions", building Amiga-based and Draco-based DTV systems for a variety of organisations, including schools and motels. Demonstrations of the high-end Draco-based systems, and the lower priced Casabianca DVE machine (a sleek single unit design which resembles the CDTV and effectively says: "This is really easy to use, you don't need to know there's an Amiga inside") seemed to make a strong impression on the few multimedia professionals who attended the show.

• **Unicom Solutions -**

Situated just outside Sydney, this graphics, video and networking specialist was represented by its Managing Director, Darren Robertson. Concentrating primarily on networking solutions, Unicorn was mainly demonstrating its Unix-based CNet card.

• **UniTech Electronics -**

Proudly declaring its long association with the Amiga, as both dealer and service centre (it started serving the Commodore community in 1983, and is now well established at St Andrews, some 60km south of Sydney) UniTech's dynamic duo, Jeff and Vickie Rose, didn't disappoint the crowds who visited their stand, offering a range of keenly sought after products. Well known for its generosity and its total commitment to the Amiga (including the education sector), UniTech sponsored St Johns Park High School and donated an HP

colour printer.

• **User Groups -**

A meeting of representatives from a number of Amiga User Groups within Australia was held on Sunday afternoon, the main aim being to see how the User Groups could be rejuvenated, how they could be used to help in the Amiga's revival in Australia and, in view of Australia's size, to determine the desirability and practicality of a different organisational structure. A problem committee, headed by Michael Gruber, was set the task of coming up with a suitable proposal.

Two User Groups who had stands at the show were the Sydney-based Commodore Hornsby User Group (CHUG) and the Victorian-based North West Amiga Users Group (NWAUG). Both stands were kept busy answering questions, giving technical advice, and running demonstrations of PD and Shareware software, as well as a variety of games.

Those wishing to contact anyone in this report can do so either through me or through Michael Burak (mother@pnc.com.au).

Finally, it was very nice to meet up again with so many old faces, and to realise that the spirit of the Amiga in Australia is not dead. incidentally, I only had to travel about 560km (350 miles) to be there, and it was well worth it!

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Visit us on the Net

www.pnc.com.au/mother/aag.html

Getting Involved

NSW

Amiga Creative Enthusiasts

Location: Illawarra Yacht Club
Frequency: 4th Wednesday of each month
Contact: Brian Gale (Secretary)
Phone: 042 752 483
Snail Mail: 19 Cowper St, Port Kembla 2505

Amiga Graphic Artists Special Interest Group

Location: Unit 13, 63 Flora St, Kirrawee 2232
Frequency: 4th Sunday of each month
Time: 01:00pm
Membership: Free
Contact: Michael Williamson (President)
Phone: 02 9545 4572
Email: willie@ar.com.au
Snail Mail: Unit 13, 63 Flora St, Kirrawee 2232

Commodore Hornsby User Group Inc.

Location: St Leo's College, Woolcott Ave, Wahroonga
Frequency: 4th Wednesday of each month
Time: 07:30pm
Membership: \$6 (Joining), \$24 (Annual), concession and family rates are also available.
Contact: Ian Sim (Secretary)
Phone: (02) 9456 3395
Email: i.sim@compassnet.com.au
Snail Mail: PO Box 1578, Hornsby Northgate, 2077

East Coast Amiga Inc.

Location: Niagra Park Public School Library
Frequency: 2nd and 4th Friday of each month
Time: 07:30pm
Contact: Tony Drieman (President)
Phone: 02 9985 9319
Snail Mail: PO Box 344, Gosford 2250

Muswellbrook Combined Computer Group

Location: Red Cross Hall
Frequency: 2nd Saturday of each month
Time: 07:30pm
Membership: \$5 (Joining fee), \$10 (Annual)
Contact: Wayne Millard (President)
Phone: 065 41 1024
Snail Mail: PO Box 848, Muswellbrook 2333

Mutual Amiga Computer Enthusiasts

Location: Beresfield Bowling Club
Frequency: 1st and 3rd Wednesday of Each month, Time: 07:30pm
Membership: \$10 (Annual)

Contact: Ken Woodward (President)
Phone: (049) 523 770 ah, (049) 675 266 bh
Snail Mail: 59 Carnley Ave, New Lambton, 2305

Southern Sydney Commodore User Group

Location: Scout Hall Connelly St, Penshurst (Behind the Penshurst RSL)
Frequency: Every 2nd Monday
Time: 09:00pm
Membership: \$20 (Annual)
Contact: Steve Perry (President)
Phone: 02 9528 6117
Snail Mail: PO Box 217, Beverly Hills 2209

Tuggerah Lakes Computer User Group Inc.

Location: Berkeley Vale Public School
Frequency: 1st and 3rd Thursday of each month, Time: 07:00pm
Membership: \$7 (Joining), \$19 (Annual)
Contact: Darrell Keirman (President)
Phone: 043 32 1087 Fax: 043 32 1087
Snail Mail: PO Box 659, Touklay 2263

Western District Amiga User Group

Location: Uniting Church in Australia, 15 Evan St, Penrith
Frequency: Every 2nd and 4th Thursday.
Time: 07:00pm till late
Membership: \$20 (Annual) or \$2 (Attendance fee)
Contact: Michael Gruber (Vice President)
Phone: 019 651 284 Fax: (047) 215 277
Email: mgruber@fl.net.au
Home Page: www.pnc.com.au/~mother/amigauser.html
Snail Mail: PO Box 6260, Baukham Hills, 2153

A.C.T.

Canberra Amiga User s Society (CAUSE)

Location: Woden Town Centre Library
Frequency: 2nd Thursday of each month
Time: 07:30pm
Contact: Steve Kennedy (Vice President)
Phone: 06 254 6711
Contact: Alex Cameron (Secretary)
Phone: 06 269 2966
Home Page: www.spirit.com.au/~jamesm/CAUSE.html
Snail Mail: PO Box 596, Canberra City, ACT, 2601

Victoria

Amiga Users Group of Victoria

Contact: David Allen
Phone: (03) 9553 3828
Homepage: eardvark.apana.org.au/~ralien/aug

Email: augvic@hotmail.com
Snail Mail: PO Box 198, Moorabbin, Victoria, 3189Add

North West Amiga User Group

Location: Moonee Ponds Community Centre
Frequency: 1st and 3rd Wednesday of each month
Time: 09:00pm
Membership: \$25
Contact: Gregory Thomas
Phone: (03) 9337-8788
Contact: Paul Demark
Phone: (03) 9317 7283
Email: gdt@minyos.its.rmit.edu.au
Snail Mail: 19 Mary St Essendon Victoria 3040

Queensland

Bundaberg Commodore & Amiga Computer Users Group

Location: 14 Miles St Bundaberg 4670
Frequency: 1st Sunday of each month
Time: 12:30pm - 04:30pm
Membership: \$24 (Annual) \$1 (Attendance)
Contact: Mr R Attwood
Phone: 071 529 215
Email: bdafton@130.aone.com.au
Snail Mail: 14 Miles St, Bundaberg 4670

Rockhampton Amiga User's Group

Location: Crescent Lagoon School
Frequency: 1st Saturday of each month
Time: 01:30pm
Membership: \$20 (Annual)
Contact: Robyn Plahn
Phone: 079 260043
Email: ianceplahn@harveynorman.com.au

Tasmania

Tasmanian Commodore Users Association Inc.

Location: 4 Cordelia Court, Rosetta, 7011
Frequency: 3rd Wednesday of each month
Time: 07:30pm
Membership: \$25 (full/family membership, discounts for students and pensioners)
Contact: David Roberts
Phone: (06) 6273 0677
Email: fillisch@netspace.net.au (Eric Fillisch)Commo
Snail Mail: PO Box 673, Hobart GPO, 7001

Dear Dianna

Many thanks to all the people who said "hello" at the Show. Some of you held back until late Saturday as I was very busy - thanks for waiting and chatting on Saturday afternoon. It was a strange sensation meeting the people I had heard so much about.

Quite a few families were in attendance at the show with little ones, so I thought this month I might give you Amigans with little ones some home hints on protecting your computer and maintaining your sanity.

DOs

Do teach your child as soon as possible the correct way to insert a floppy disk and/or CD ROM. Your music tape and video recorders are good training grounds for this. By the time terror toddler is 18 months, s/he should be well on the way to inserting disks/tapes relatively gently. The key word here is GENTLY. It is imperative that children of all ages learn to insert floppy disks correctly and gently into drives, as a repair to your drive will be inevitable if they are rough.

Do teach your child as soon as possible that the computer is a piece of electronics that has/can do certain functions. The sooner terror toddler understands that s/he can achieve something with the machine, the sooner keyboard bashing and mouse dropping will cease. By the way, my son thought the mouse was a telephone hand set for a while and kept picking it up and saying "hello".

Do allow your child to experiment with your calculator/s, printer/s

and fax, etc. Language such as "Don't Touch or I'll Smack You" is confusing for little ones. After all, you are touching them all the time aren't you? It is best to use phrases such as "We only use the mouse on the table", etc. I know it is easier to chuck them out of the room, however this will only serve to frustrate your young one's insatiable curiosity, which, by the way, is your child's key to learning.

Many parents, over the years, have told me that they keep a separate machine for their children - usually an unused A500. This can be a good compromise, however referring to your computer as the "good" computer is not an ideal term as it infers that your young one is not worth something "good".

DON'Ts

Do not allow drinks or food near the computer. Try to set a good example yourself. If you have a window ledge nearby or a book shelf, use this to stow your drink. Make sure terror toddler cannot reach or knock down any fluids - for the safety of the child, as well as the computer. You would not believe how many "s/he spilt a drink over the keyboard/box of disks" stories I have heard.

Do not allow terror toddler to bash the keyboard or throw the mouse on the floor, etc. Under 18 months this is near impossible, but do persevere - they do learn eventually!

Do not allow children access to power points, exposed electronics or valuable data (disks, CDs) as you would be inviting trouble. My son is so keen he will climb the computer desk up to shelving to

obtain "stuff" to insert into the computer. Also, if you are using your computer and a "switch off" would be devastating, make arrangements so that your little one either cannot access your power button or the room.

Do not feel pressured to buy loads of games or "educational" software for your young ones. Little ones enjoy repetition - when they achieve positive outcomes. They will soon grow out of very basic games. Tiered software is good value - our daughter has been playing the "Noddy" educational game for years!

HAPPY PARENTING AND
HAPPY COMPUTING.

PS: It is not a great idea to allow cricket bats or golf clubs near your monitor either!



AAG

Australian Amiga Gazette

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If you are interested in contributing to Australian Amiga Gazette we would like to hear from you. Until our circulation builds up we can't offer any incentive other than our gratitude and that of our readers. Articles should be submitted as plain text files. Graphics as eps or gif format. Please do not send your originals just a copy.

Helping Hands

If you live in the local area and would like to be involved in helping prepare AAG please contact Michael on (047) 361-311. No experience is required, just some spare time and a sense of humour.

Important Notice

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