Features

AMIGA

Here are some of Rainboot 4’s features:

• 100% system friendly, runs on all Amigas.
• Transition effects.
• Smooth graphics scrolling.
• Transparent graphics.
• Easy monitoring of user input.

Editorial

We’re back with another new issue of Total Amiga! The theme of this issue has turned out to be bringing new technologies to the Amiga. First off we have a feature on the Internet via ADSL. Although ADSL on the Amiga has always been possible the new DSL only packages mean that at last you can buy and fit your own equipment so to bi monthly. As we’ve said before a modem you don’t need. Another technology which has been around a while but which is new to the Amiga is USB. EAB have produced the first Amiga USB card in the form of the Highway Zero card, we put it through its paces on page 22.

Before you read the rest of the mag (what do you mean you don’t read my editorial first!?) here are some thoughts about the future of Total Amiga, please let me know your thoughts.

If you read my editorial in a last issue you’ll know that we were aiming to get this issue out two weeks early as the first step in a move to bi-monthly publishing. We haven’t been able to achieve that but although this issue is on time (give or take a week) we’re definitely moving a step in to bi-monthly publishing. We’re also looking for writers for several years and by the look of the website and screenshots it will be a very professional and engrossing game.

We’ll have more details and possibly a review in the next issue of Total Amiga. The Tales of Tamar website is at: http://www.tamarnet.net

Eternity have announced that the Amiga version of their Tales of Tamar game will be released on the 1st of September. Tales of Tamar is a turn based strategy game set in time similar to the middle ages. It is designed for on-line Internet play via EMail and incorporates an on-line chat facility so players can talk in real time. TOT will be released for the Amiga first but Eternity are also working on versions for Linux, Windows, Mac and Java so the potential is there for a huge base of players.

Tales of Tamar has been in development and testing for several years and by the look of the website and screenshots it will be a very professional and engaging game.

We’ll have more details and possibly a review in the next issue of Total Amiga. The Tales of Tamar website is at: http://www.tamarnet.net

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About Total Amiga

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AmigaOS 4.0 by Amiga

Editorial

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If you wish to contact a contributor please send your message to one of the addresses in this section and we will pass it on.

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GoldEd AIX
Prometheus Development Resumes

Elbox have announced another member of their growing family of Amiga tower kits, the Mirage 3000 is a sleek but undoubtedly huge tower for the A3000 desktop. Unlike the Revel 3000 model mentioned last issue the Mirage 3000 does not include a bus board or a Mediator logic card however a Mediator 3000 bus board is required to use the tower so you will need to purchase one with the Mirage. The tower has three 5.25” drive bays, a bay for the A3000’s floppy drive and five internal 3.5” bays for hard disks. The whole shebang is powered by a 300W power supply. The Mirage 3000 costs 179 Euros excluding VAT (€159.95 including VAT from Power Computing) and the Mediator 3000 busboard and logic card is 289 Euros (£244.95).

After last years successful show that was attended by over 350 people several UK usergroups are again working together to stage World of Amiga South East 2002 on Saturday the 2nd of November. The show will be at the same venue as last year, Poplars Hall, near Brentwood in Essex, just a few minutes drive from the M25 and walking distance from a main line railway station. The venue has free parking and a licensed bar, sandwiches and snacks will also be available on the day. The following exhibitors have already confirmed that they will be attending:

• Amiga (in the form of Fleecy Moss)
• Eyetech
• Forematt Home Computing
• Kicksoft
• Weird Science

We are talking to other potential exhibitors including several European retailers and developers and hope to announce more exhibitors over the next few weeks. In addition to the exhibitors there will be many other attractions at the show. We’re planning to have more demonstrations and games and there will be a strong usergroup presence offering information and friendly advice.

To keep up to date with news of the show please visit the website:
http://www.worldofamiga.com

A free upgrade to PageStream 4.1 (reviewed last issue) is now available from Grasshopper. This version fixes numerous minor bugs from the 4.1 release, registered users can download it from a secure section on the Grasshopper website:
www.grasshopper.com

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www.grasshopper.com

The final version of Dietmar Eilert’s well known text editor, GoldEd Studio, is about to be released. Some time ago Dietmar announced that the development of GoldEd had been cancelled even though he had said version 7 was in development. The new version is an update on version 6 and will override the work on version 7 that had been completed, which includes an overhaul over the user interface giving it a slicker look and new icons. The full version of GoldEd Studio costs 59.99 Euros (about £40), discounts are available for existing users. Anyone who preordered version 7 will get the upgrade free.

For further details and to download a demo visit:
golded.dietmar-eilert.de

Prometheus developments join the mailing list at:
http://www.yahoogroups.com/group/Amiga-Prometheus
You can also try the Matay website at:
http://www.matay.pl

Keep on Scanin’

IOSpirit (the new name for Innovative, the developers of fxPaint, and VHSiStudio) have released a new version of their all-in-one scanning package fxSCAN. Version 4 has many new and enhanced features. One of the most interesting is the improved OCR (optical character recognition) engine which now has improved accuracy and can output the scanned document as an HTML file complete with pictures. Native modules are supplied for PageStream (PageStream and PowerUp), MorphOS and Amition so fxSCAN gets maximum performance on these systems, this should especially benefit the OCR function. As far as we are aware fxSCAN is the first commercial application to provide direct Amition support, this means the module is compiled as x86 code so it should be able to run through the 68k emulator. The author of fxSCAN says this doubles the speed on Amition.

With the optional IO USB module fxSCAN 4 will support USB scanners, initially most of the Epson USB range except the 1250 and 1250 are expected to work with the driver.

Here are some of the other interesting features:
• PDF Support - scans can be exported as multi-page PDF files for cross platform compatibility. Ghostscript is not required.
• Improved Photocopy Function - includes preview with brightness, contrast and gamma controls.
• Direct support for TurboPrint - not via graphics publisher.
• Support for automatic document feeders and transparency adaptors if they are enabled in the driver.

Windows Keys Be Gone!

Thanks to emulators, keyboard adaptors and new systems such as the AmigaOne more and more “Amiga” systems are being used with standard “PC” keyboards usually equipped with inappropriate “Windows” function keys. Netherlands based Amiga dealer Computer City are planning a solution to this blight, official Amiga key caps to replace the Windows keys. The key caps will be sourced from Cherry and will be available separately or fitted to one of Cherry’s CyBo@rd keyboards. To keep the cost reasonable Computer City are looking for pre-orders so they can bulk order the keys caps, the pre-orders will not be charged until they are shipped.

The key caps alone, for you to fit to your own CyBo@rd will cost 16 Euros (about £10.50), a complete keyboard is available for 40 Euros (£25) and a wireless keyboard and mouse is 140 Euros (£90).

To place a pre-order visit:
http://www.competity.nl/
amigakeyboard

Mediator USB

With the excitement about USB support coming to the Amiga Elbox have announced that Mediator users will not have to wait long for drivers so they can use a USB PCI card in their Mediator. Elbox are developing their own USB stack (the software that drives the USB card) but have not yet announced what type of USB devices they will support, we also wait to hear which PCI cards can be used. According to a posting on the Amiga-Mediator mailing list from Elbox the drivers should be out by the time you read this.

Right: the 2001 show was packed.

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Right: the 2001 show was packed.
Australian Amiga retailer and ISP Boing.net have announced a Zorro II USB card called the Thylacine, the card is slated to be available in August.

Interest is certainly the card will be supplied with the AmigaOS 4 USB stack but compiled for 68k. Prototype Thylacine cards have been used as the hardware reference for the OS 4 stack’s development. Initially drivers will be supplied for printers, keyboards and scanners. Printers are said to work with the existing version of Turbo Print without modification so we expect a USB device is provided for printers. Printers are supported via a human interface device class driver, at the moment this is basic and only supports simple keyboards and mice (we expect this means no scroll wheel or “multimedia” key support.

Scanners are supported by drivers for the freeware Betascan package. Several Epson USB scanners have been tested and most others (with the notable exception of the Perfection 1250 and 1250 Pro) are expected to work. An Epson Stylus 740 printer has been tested and again USB printers which have a driver in Turbo Print are expected to work.

Thylacine developer, Robert Tsien tells us that additional drivers are in the works. Several Epson USB scanners have been tested and most others (with the notable exception of the Perfection 1250 and 1250 Pro) are expected to work.

The Thylacine prototype.

Digital Almanac III, the latest release of this astronomy program, came out some time ago, since its release regular updates have occurred. The latest version 4.8 which includes experimental access to the DSS-2 catalogue of nearly half a billion stars! A beta copy of version 4.9 can be downloaded from the program’s website and the list of changes and enhancements looks impressive:

• Improved settings GUI
• Automatic star booster for field angles smaller than 20 degrees
• Dynamic star data cache to improve responsiveness
• Automatic low memory handling
• Various improvements to star data included
• Implementation of the Hertzsprung-Russel diagram with logarithmic colors
• Detailed graphics of solar eclipse circumstances from the years 1900 to 2100

Digital Almanac can now so they can try the full program free of charge. The full version of DA-III on CD-ROM costs 45Euro (about £30) including postage and can be ordered direct from the author. For more information and to download a demo of DA-III visit:

www.soft-ware.de/dalmanac

• Improved textures for the sun and several satellites
• Plus many more fixes and improvements (most of which I didn’t understand!)

Users who want to try out Digital Almanac can now download a keyfile for the DA-II release from Aminet (misc/sci/DAlmanac_Key.ihx)

More Flickers Fixed

Individual Computers have added a new product to their wide range of handy Amiga expansions. The Indivision is an external flickerfixer for all Amigas, it boosts the horizontal frequency of Amiga screensmodes to 31kHz so they can be displayed on a standard SVGA monitor and also removes flicker from interlaced screens. The unique feature of the Indivision is that it can be used with video mixing equipment such as a genlock. The Indivision is available now from Individual Computers and costs 99Euro (about £65). Further information should be available at:

http://www.individual.com/
Eyetech’s MD, Alan Redhouse updates us on the most anticipated Amiga hardware for years.

What a busy two months this has been, but whilst OS4 continues its development - now with most of the planned OS4.2 features built in - we have shipped AmigaOne G3-SE boards with (Linux/UAE-PPO) PPC to developers. The AmigaOne has itself made several public appearances - including at the AmiWest show in Sacramento at the end of July.

We initially shipped these boards to a group of development experts to thoroughly test out the hardware and to port modern Linux distributions - and UAE - to the AmigaOne board. They did an outstanding job, porting five modern Linux-PCC distributions in a matter of weeks. However, it soon became apparent that the BIOS that we had originally specified (i.e. the code in ROM which initialises the hardware and loads the OS) had several limitations. Accordingly, and in parallel with OS4 development, we and Hyperion have put together a team to port the PPCboot firmware to the AmigaOne. This has actually occurred much more quickly than we originally expected and so now we expect to ship the remaining developer boards - with the new firmware - at the beginning of September.

Having brought the BIOS development - ‘in-house’ - means that we/Hyperion are able to add in some significant ‘Amiga-like’ features to the boot process as well as maintaining full compatibility with Linux-only and dual-boot systems. It also means that we should be able to ship end-user systems - initially with Linux, but with a free upgrade to OS4 - at the start of October. This will not suit everyone - for example those that want a load-and-go, ready built OS4/A1 system, but sufficient people have requested it to make it a worthwhile option. For those who want a complete ready-to-go OS4/A1 system both us and Hyperion are on track to have these available in time for Christmas - i.e. by the end of November 2002.

Of course this PPCboot development also benefits MAI Logic, the manufacturers of the Artica ‘S’ chipset used in the AmigaOne, by allowing them to offer a compatible version of PPCboot to developers of set-top boxes etc. who want to use their chipset. In fact one spin-off of this that I am particularly proud of is that MAI and Eyetech have formed a long term business partnership outside of the AmigaOne project.

Finally I would like to say a big thank you to all those who joined the ‘1 am Amiga’ club in June/July. Although neither Eyetech nor Hyperion benefit financially from this scheme it does give us a much firmer basis to estimate initial production volumes, and may even allow us to make some small - but no doubt welcome - price reductions to end-user boards (subject, as always, to exchange rate variations).

So - if you haven’t done so already - now is the time to start saving for your new AmigaOne, and quickly!

That’s all for now, Alan

The purpose of the hardware certification program is to ensure that consumers know when they are buying a machine that will run AmigaOS at its optimum efficiency. Many reputable dealers in the past have been tarnished with a brush made black by a few rogue dealers and companies that have singularly failed to provide the service they aimed to deliver, whether that be shoddy components, badly installed software, or worse, disappearing entirely with hard earned pre payment money.

Whilst that is the primary aim of the certification program, it also has a wider agenda, namely to ensure that as we begin to move the Amiga platform back into the mainstream markets, existing and new consumers can be guaranteed a quality experience, from first contact with a developer all the way through to post-purchase support, something that has been notoriously lacking in the past; and again with one or two companies blight-ing the reputations of the rest of the community.

The second issue raised is the inclusion of an authentication mechanism in AmigaOS4.0, namely the infamous ‘dongle code’. In short it is a section of code inserted into the boot ROM which the OS refers to at various times during an AmigaOS session to ensure that it is on a certified and authentic AmigaOne machine. The single reason for this is to prevent piracy of AmigaOS.

Whilst we have all heard the stories of piracy in the past, we have to ensure that from the start of the rebirth of the AmigaOS, we are actively promoting anti-piracy measures. Firstly, we will be glad if we can get 10k users of AmigaOS4.0 in the first 12 months, not just from a user base perspective but also from the revenue that will bring in, going directly to those who have worked on AmigaOS4.0. Secondly, if we are to attract developers back to such a small platform, they have to see evidence that Amiga is serious about protecting not just our intellectual property but also the property and potential sales of the developer itself. Nothing can demonstrate the curse of piracy on our platform so much as the freeware section, where Hyperion’s actual sales of the product were four times less than the number of product registrations for the updates.

People such as Davy Wentröer (Audio Evolution), Ron of Computer City (Eyetech), Medapoint and Stefan Bustroem (Ibrowse) have not just stuck by our platform and created product that we all use, but they are at this very moment working hard on product for OS4.0. We as a community owe it to them to do everything possible to ensure that they are rewarded. Without that reward, there will be no new products, and the Amiga rebirth will falter and die.

I want to end on a high note though. The Aminwest show in Sacramento showed that there is still huge interest in Amiga, and Bill McEwen said that he could have sold an AmigaOne and OS4.0 to everyone if he had known on time. Sore point I know, but Bill also reiterated our policy of announcing only progress and not giving a final ship date until we have the product working in front of us, and most people seem to be happy with this method.

Progress is being made. There are more screenshots of the new interface up on the Amiga website, almost all of the AmigaOS4.0 modules have been completed. ExeSG is booting on CSSPC boards, and the AmigaOne is now running Linux and UAE - one was demonstrated by Randy of CompuCore.

Slowly but surely the Amiga rebirth is occurring.
OS 4 however they have decided to implement a more complex memory system than was planned. This will include a full virtual addressing model, something that means than an application being allocated a particular area of physical memory it is given a virtual area which the OS then relates to physical memory. The advantage of this model is that the OS is in control of what memory is used, fragmentation is eliminated and it becomes possible to implement various schemes to protect the system from crashes. One direct benefit that Ben Hermans mentioned is that this system will allow program stack allocations to be dynamically increased, he estimated that 30% of Amiga crashes are due to applications running out of stack space so this would be a major boon. When virtual memory has been mentioned in the past many knowledgeable Amiga programmers have commented that it would not be possible to implement it without breaking existing applications, it remains to be seen how Hyperion will handle this, perhaps some features will only work on new OS 4 applications. Ben stated that although this improved system would add about three weeks to the development time it was justified by the extra functionality and improved stability.

Most of the OS 4 modules have been developed on Classic Amiga systems with CyberStorm PPC accelerators so far. The new OS uses a hardware abstraction layer (HAL), this is the part of the OS code which is specific to a particular PPC hardware platform, currently this is being perfected on the CyberStorm PPC and once it is complete it can be quickly ported to another platform such as the AmigaOne. Hyperion are making sure they have the HAL specification complete and debugged before they start on the HAL for the AmigaOne hardware to prevent having two code bases in development. Once the HAL is complete it is expected to take about one and a half to two weeks to port it over to a new hardware platform. That said Ben Hermans and Bill McEwan have both confirmed that the new exec kernel (the heart of the OS) is already booting on the AmigaOne and that the boot sequence is finalised. Some of the new Gio cards seem to be confirmed but it will not be ready until after the CyberStorm because possibly some options specific to certain hardware will be added (memory timing options were mentioned so I think this may be similar to the CyberStorm PPC’s early start-up screen).

Several options are being evaluated for how the new OS will be booted on existing Amiga hardware (with a PPC accelerator). A third party has suggested producing a plug-in card which would contain a ROM to boot the new OS, this would obviously add significant cost and an application would need to be used to initiate booting.

Another option would be to have a boot image which ran in classic Amiga mode then re-booted the Amiga to load the new kernal, this is how current Amiga Linux distributions work. Obviously this method would require existing AmigaOS to boot and then re-boot into OS 4 slowing the boot process. The final option and the one that seems to be favoured by Hyperion is a custom boot loader appended to the hard disk, this would still require a re-boot but it could happen very early in the start-up process and so should only add a few seconds to boot time.

Some of the utility programs that will be included with OS 4 have been announced. The first being a new PPC native version of the media Installer utility which used to be provided by a third party who failed to deliver. The BIOS is stored in ROM and initialises the basic motherboard devices such as memory and the North and South bridges and gets the OS loading from disk. The Hyperion BIOS will be based on the open source PPCBoot BIOS. If the user desires it will be possible to dual boot AmigaOS 4 and another OS such as one of the Linux distributions which have already been prepared for the AmigaOne. Note that the BIOS is not the same as the Amiga’s Kickstart ROM which performs BIOS tasks and much more. For OS 4 much more of the OS will be dual bootable including the early start-up screen. On that subject Hyperion expect the early start-up screen to be largely unchanged for OS 4.
The Intuition and Reaction interfaces are still being improved but work on them is coming to an end. The big jobs that remain are to integrate the disparate parts and as this involves the new PPC parts, existing OS components and the 68k emulator there is certainly room for unexpected delays and missed deadlines. Hopefully, after previous delays and missed deadlines, this time they will give a firm date, but they did say that there would be no delay because development started on these boards months ago. The Hyperion team are to be congratulated for their progress and, although Hyperion don’t expect too many issues, it is good to see them keep a tight grip on the end of the year and they seem to be working hard to make sure that it will be much better before that. Another clue is that the Italian Pianeta Amiga show is advertising that both the AmigaOne and OS 4 will be on show there on the 21st and 22nd of September (whether OS 4 will be running on the AmigaOne is still not clear). The order in which the OS will be released is much clearer, everyone says the version for classic hardware with a CyberStorm PPC accelerator will be released first because development started on these boards so naturally they are ahead. Release on the Blizzard PPC and AmigaOne is then expected at about the same time, both requiring some additional work for their unique hardware. Other PPC platforms like Ebox’s Shark PPC will come afterwards, although if Hyperion are right with their estimate of the time to port the HAL it needn’t be a long wait.

Richard de Rivaz is the director of MDR, and readers may recall an ID article from Amiga Active some time ago, as well as appearances by Richard at a number of Amiga shows. According to Richard, the current remote access solution is called Intuition. Access to an ID server remotely via its web based interface, is it possible to see the hardware, download system files, review and alter event times and even give commands to turn devices on or off immediately. The system can also be configured to download email at preset times, which are stored in a separate web interface. This allows access to any mailboxes and can be accessed directly through a web browser.

The news is not all good for AmigaActive. Bill Admitted that they were 18 months behind schedule, meaning that Amiga (not AmigaOS) is now much closer to being ready for release. It is hoped that the OS components are now complete and being separately tested. Apart from the additional work on Exec SG and the Integration and Test team, the other major work is to remove the need for a radio or line of sight IR system. When accessed through the mains ring, removing the need for a radio or line of sight IR system. The in house Speedy service team has also enhanced the functionality of their home server system InetDial (ID) with the addition of dynamic remote web access. Although some ISPs, such as Demon, provide static IP addresses to their users as standard, and most ISPs use dynamic IP addresses, where users are allocated an IP address each time they dial in. This has traditionally presented a problem when connecting to a home server, but ID now resolves this problem by providing a dynamic link service.

News

Sussex based company MDR Interfaces Ltd. have announced the functionality of their home server system InetDial (ID) with the addition of dynamic remote web access. Some ISPs, such as Demon, provide static IP addresses to their users as standard, and most ISPs use dynamic IP addresses, where users are allocated an IP address each time they dial in. This has traditionally presented a problem when connecting to a home server, but ID now resolves this problem by providing a dynamic link service.

Amiga operating system, combining the advantages of cheap hardware with the stable operating system we all know and love. Anybody wishing to help fund the project can do so by joining the SolarNavigator club, allowing you to purchase merchandise such as clothing, mugs and even ship hull space on which to display your own name or message. SolarNavigator are doing a “Back for the Future” and creating an album of music, based on an environmental theme, which will raise money for the project. Anybody interested in getting a break and putting themselves forward for the album should check out the website. The site also features pictures showing the building and testing of the SolarNavigator scale models and early concepts, as well as general links to other sites on solar vehicles and renewable energy sources and the technology used in the ship.

For the project. Anybody interested in getting a break and putting themselves forward for the album should check out the website. The site also features pictures showing the building and testing of the SolarNavigator scale models and early concepts, as well as general links to other sites on solar vehicles and renewable energy sources and the technology used in the ship.

News

InetDial & SolarNavigator

Not satisfied with providing the Amiga’s premier home automation system MDR Interfaces is about to set sail and they’re taking AmigaOS with them! Philip Corner finds out more.

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Amiga President Bill McEwen, attended a computer show at the Holiday Inn in Sacramento, California, USA. AmiWest 2002 may finally prove to be a turning point in Amiga’s fortunes after many years of market collapse and belt tightening. It was very refreshing to hear Bill McEwen in his speech. Amiga are known for owning up to mistakes made by the current Amiga owners after acquiring Intuition from Gateway in January 2000. Bill Admitted that they were 18 months behind schedule, effectively meaning that for most of their tenure as owners of the Amiga name, pretty much went down the toilet. Good news was finally that, Bill McEwen seems to have taken a lead out of the AmigaRedhouse school of press releases, and actually gave a speech that was straight and to the point. Gone was the glib, overhyped, rose tinted vision of the future, instead Bill shot straight from the hip and laid the facts down, something an Amiga user has been wanting to see. Bill McEwen also revealed that the last 6 months has spent concentrating mainly on securing finance for Amiga and they’re taking AmigaOS with them! Philip Corner finds out more.

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In the UK you need to get a combined ADSL modem and Ethernet router. These devices connect to your ISP via ADSL and allow computers connected to them via Ethernet to access the internet. The ADSL connection is taken care of by the firmware on the router which is usually configured using a web browser so you don’t need any proprietary software on your Amiga. What you do need is a TCP/IP stack such as Miami or Genesis and an Ethernet card.

The other good thing about having an Ethernet router is that you can share your internet connection with several computers as long as they are on your Ethernet network (often called a LAN or Local Area Network). In this case each computer on your network can have its own IP address and access the internet independently.

Whatever it says on the box, modems are slow. When compared to the speed you can get with a 56k modem, a typical ADSL connection is much slower. For example, a 20kbps compressed file (for instance an archive, movie or mp3) would take nearly an hour on a good 56k modem but take about five minutes to download. You can get a good idea of whether your line is suitable by checking the availability on the ADSL site. This will tell you what type of line you have and what speed you can expect. The site will also tell you whether your line needs a micro-filter or not.

What do you need for ADSL work?
To use ADSL in the UK you need a BT line (in other countries you’ll have to talk to your local telephone supplier) connected to an exchange which has ADSL equipment installed. The distance of the line to your exchange (not the direct distance) must be less than 5.5km and the line must be of sufficient quality and not contain any optical fibre. If you have an ADSL service such as Home Highway it must be removed before ADSL can be installed but we understand an upgrade option may be available in the future. ADSL services sold by a number of Internet Service Providers (ISPs), when you place your order, they will ask you if you have an Ethernet port. This is a device that plugs into a telephone socket and has an RJ11 socket for the ADSL modem and a normal BT phone socket for your phone or any other equipment that uses a telephone line. On your Amiga you only need two pieces of software to connect to the Internet via the Ethernet router, a TCP/IP stack and a freeware network driver. There are SANA II drivers available for generic Ethernet cards including some PCMCIA cards for the A1200 and PCI cards on X86 hardware. Another significant advantage of the wires only option is that it is cheaper because you don’t need to ‘rent’ the hardware or have an engineer visit.

What happens when ADSL is installed?
When your line has been ADSL enabled initially you should not notice any difference unless you have an ADSL modem installed, the telephone can still be used normally. If you connect an ADSL modem and configure it correctly you should see an ADSL connection light about 30 seconds after it is switched on (this light is labelled “SHOWTIME” on the Conexant router reviewed in this issue). To use ADSL and your telephone at the same time you need at least one microfilter. This is a device that plugs into a telephone socket and has an RJ11 socket for the ADSL modem and a normal BT phone socket for your phone or any other equipment that uses a telephone line. If you have installed a micro-filter you may need to add an Ethernet card to your Amiga: the exact answer to this will depend on what Amiga you have, which ISP you choose and what equipment you already have. Below we have tried to estimate the costs for different Amiga set-ups.

What Software and Setup?
On your Amiga you only need two pieces of software to connect to the Internet via the Ethernet router, a TCP/IP stack and a freeware network driver. There are SANA II drivers available for generic Ethernet cards including some PCMCIA cards for the A1200 and PCI cards on X86 hardware. Another significant advantage of the wires only option is that it is cheaper because you don’t need to ‘rent’ the hardware or have an engineer visit.

Robert Williams and Mick Sutton find that Broadband Internet access is now within the reach of many more Amiga users. But just what do you need to get into the fast lane?

On an A1200 without a busboard (Zorro or PCI) you can add a PCMCIA Ethernet card designed for laptop PC’s. You can either buy a generic card that is compatible with the freeware cnet device or buy a bundled card and driver from an Amiga dealer. However you get your card you will need to fix the CC_reset line on the A1200 motherboard, this can be easily achieved with a plug on fix that fits over the Gayle chip (easiest, no soldering required) or by soldering a couple of components on the motherboard (you will need good soldering skills, the instructions are in the Cnet archive). If your A1200 is mounted in a tower where the PCMCIA slot is at the bottom you will require an angle adapter so the card will fit.

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Once installation is complete switching on the router or

The router is configured using built-in web pages which can be accessed from a computer connected to it. Before setup can be started the computer must be configured to use the same sub domain as the router (see tutorial for details). Once this is done a web browser can be used to access 10.0.0.2, which prompts for a username and password which are supplied in the manual. The web pages provide a list of options to configure and we would recommend following the "big three" Amiga web browsers. When you make changes to the configuration the router often has to be rebooted (via an option in the web pages) which may cause the connection to be lost, this takes about thirty seconds and causes the ADSL connection to be lost. Be careful not to reboot the system because this does not have an IP address on the Internet.

The router’s Virtual Server option allows you to map a port on the router to one on a local machine where a service is being run. When a client on the Internet tries to access the mapped port on the router the request is transparently forwarded to the local machine. Multiple virtual servers can be defined but you can only specify a single port for each entry, not a range. If your ISP assigns you multiple IP addresses (this is only available on more expensive business ADSL accounts in the UK) for the machines on your network you can disable NAT, the router then acts as a bridge connecting your network directly to the ISPs.

Feature the CA64E lacks is a firewall, this is a feature of some routers which can block certain types of Internet traffic from entering and leaving the local network. With this router connected directly to the Internet, especially with a permanent connection like ADSL, a firewall is an important protection. However if you leave the CA64E set to use NAT then your local computer(s) are not connected directly to the Internet, only the ADSL modem is connected. Unless you configure the virtual server options to allow connections to the computers on the LAN from the WAN (Internet) your machines will be protected. Not having a firewall does mean you cannot block machines on the LAN from accessing particular services on the Internet, on a small network this is not normally a requirement although on machines susceptible to Trojan horse attacks (it has to be said Windows is the prime example) you may also want to run personal firewall software.

Although the CA64E does not come configured for UK ADSL and no UK specific instructions are supplied we found the information easily enough on the Internet. Then it was simple to setup and worked first time as soon as ADSL was activated. The web based configuration is easy to use and works well with Amiga browsers. For a single computer or small home network this router offers all the features you need and some additional options for future expansion. Although it lacks a firewall this is not really required if you’re using NAT to share the connection. Once the router is installed and configured you can pretty much forget about it, the Internet connection is always there so you just need to turn on the Amiga and run a TCP/IP stack to get online. The CA64E offers far more for the money than any other comparable ADSL router we’ve seen, it’s an ideal way for an Amiga to get connected!

If you need to set the DNS servers select the “Database” page from list on the left of the Miami window and then “DNS Servers” from the top cycle gadget. Then click “Add” and enter the server IP address for each server.

With Ethernet you will probably want Miami to go on-line as soon as it is loaded, to do this go to the “Events” page and select the “auto-online” check box in the “Start” section. You may also want to choose “Hide GUI” from the cycle gadget so Miami is iconised as soon as it connects.

When your settings are complete choose “Save as default” form the “Settings” menu. When you want the Ethernet connection to be loaded each time you run Miami select “Save as...” if you wish to keep your current default settings (for example a dial-up connection).

If all has gone to plan clicking “Online” will now connect your Amiga to the Ethernet network allowing it to communicate with the Internet, on a small network this is a requirement although on machines susceptible to Trojan horse attacks (it has to be said Windows is the prime example) you may also want to run personal firewall software.

Robert Williams and Mick Sutton find out if one of the lowest priced ADSL routers is cheap and cheerful or cheap and nasty!
Features

To check this try pinging the router, to do this open a new internet browser and enter the following command: Miami:MIamiPing 10.0.0.2

When you press return you should see lines similar to the following repeated every second or so:

In either case press Ctrl and C to stop the ping. If there is a problem check your settings in Miami, check the router is switched on and all cables are correctly connected (you don’t need the WAN (ADSL) cable connected for this test to work).

Select the ‘WAN’ page from the ‘Configuration’ section in the left frame, then in the page on the right change the following settings:

Then that’s all there is to it! Now click “Save Settings” and then “Submit” at the bottom of the page.

Click the “Submit” button at the bottom of the page.

If there is a problem you will see:

If you get a “free CD-ROM” with your purchase, please make sure your account has been properly set up.

The web configuration interface as it appears in a browser. In this case showing the Diagnostic Test section which tests certain aspects of the ADSL and LAN connections.

If you’re not sure what to do, just leave it alone.

Click the “Submit” button at the bottom of the page.

If you get a “free CD-ROM” with your purchase, please make sure your account has been properly set up.

If you’re not sure what to do, just leave it alone.
T he Universal Serial Bus was developed as a method of connecting relatively low speed peripherals replacing the RS232 serial and Centronics parallel ports that have been standard on most computer platforms for well over a decade. USB has a number of advantages over the existing ports. Multiple devices can be connected to one USB port using hubs. USB is faster than both serial and parallel ports so it can be used for devices which require little data transfer such as mice and keyboards and those that transfer more data such as printers and scanners. USB devices can draw their power from the bus so many do not require an external power supply. From a manufacturer’s point of view USB is relatively easy to implement to use a connector with just four pins, the connectors are also physically smaller than a typical parallel or serial port.

With the popularity of USB on the two major consumer computing platforms, Windows and Macintosh, the USB drivers access the USB hardware and deals with the low level device access. The Highway is supplied with a USB stack called Poseidon, developed by Chris Hodges. Any USB driver which connects with USB requires a USB stack already installed on a driver and has been designed so that other USB cards can be supported.

Poseidon needs to be installed before the Highway and any attached USB devices are recognised. The stack is supplied on a floppy disk and is installed using the standard installation薄era. Two options are given during installation, the first is whether Poseidon should be started automatically at start-up. If you select this option a command is added to the end of your user-startup file to load the USB stack, devices are then ready to use. USB ports might not function as your Amiga boots. The second option is to install an updated installation device. This is a device that the OS which handles the keyboard and mouse replaces because using USB devices to seamlessly replace the standard mouse and keyboard. The USB stack also manages the USB connections. The updated device also supports multiple keyboards and mice should you have any USB keyboards and mice (you need them for any reason). Also on the Poseidon disk is an Extras driver which contains amongst other things, the Fat95 file system which is used for many mass storage devices and some nice Glow Icons for the stack’s utilities. USB peripherals are grouped into classes based on their function, for example keyboards and mice generally belong under the Human Interface Device (HID) class and storage devices such as disk drives come under the Storage Device (MSD) class. Poseidon allows class drivers to be loaded under the same HID and MSD classes. A number of drivers are supplied so the Highway can be used with several types of device straight away, the currently supported classes are:

**Hubs**

A hub allows you to connect several devices to one USB port, usually they are a small box with one USB input and several USB outputs or “ports”. The number of downstream connections provided by a hub varies and can sometimes be found built into other devices such as keyboards allowing another device (for example a mouse) to be “daisy chained”. A hub can pick up its power from the bus (meaning that in total the devices connected must not draw more than 500 milliamperes) or if it can have its own power supply (self powered), in that case each device can draw up to the 500mA maximum allowed in the USB standard. The Highway can only supply a limited current, however because the whole Zorro bus is limited to 2A (2000mA) so the manual recommends high drain devices (in particular anything with a motor such as a ZIP drive) should be connected to a self powered hub. Poseidon supports self powered hubs and most are supported by the stack. I tried a Benken four port hub that is readily available locally and all devices except an Epson printer (see printers section below) worked equally well connected to the hub or directly to the Highway.

**Keyboards and Mice**

As I mentioned above USB keyboards and mice generally belong to the HID class, at the moment this is not supported by the Highway however it does support the bootmouse and bootkeyboard classes. These classes were designed for simple keyboard and mouse support in system configuration screens (such as a PC’s BIOS). The Suppliers work with most keyboards and mice and provide fairly basic functionality. Mice act as a simple three button mouse, any additional buttons or scroll wheels are ignored. That said modern optical mice such as my Logitech Wheel Mouse Optical and a Microsoft Intellimouse Explorer work well (with the exception of their scroll wheels). I also noticed that the same mouse connected through USB seems to track more smoothly than through my Nano to Amiga adaptor. On the keyboard front the basic keys (127 if I remember correctly) are supported by the PC style keyboard are supported but not any additional “multimedia” buttons. The author of Poseidon has said he is working on a full HID class driver for Poseidon which should enable support for scroll wheels and additional buttons on mice and “multimedia” keyboards.

Since I got my Highway I’ve had my mouse connected by USB, it has worked well and my system seems to be as stable as ever. I was also pleased to see that the mouse continues to work smoothly even when there is intense activity on the USB bus such as printing or copying large amounts of data, I think this is because USB can prioritise the USB stack over other “interactive” devices. Anyway it works very smoothly, pretty impressive for the first release of an entirely new product to the Amiga.

**Printers and Parallel Devices**

When a USB printer is connected to the Highway the Poseidon USB stack automatically creates a device driver called udpParallel which can be used to access the printer, if multiple printers are attached they are assigned different unit numbers. Being able to access the printer via USB doesn’t suddenly make printer drivers available however if the printer has both USB and parallel ports then there is a similar model with a parallel connection someone may have already made a USB driver, for example in the Tuftprit package. If this is the case then you just need to set the driver to print to the uspparallel device and the appropriate unit and protocol as normal. We tested USB printing with a Canon S405 and Epson Stylus 500. The 500 worked well on both the Highway and the Epson when connected through a hub but this issue is unlikely to be a problem on platforms. It worked perfectly when connected directly to the Highway. We measured the USB printing speed between USB and the standard parallel port and the speed was up to 20 percent faster with similar tests. We have proven with the mass storage devices (400 - 500KBs) that USB is much faster than the standard parallel port (about 50KBs) this suggests that the main bottleneck in Amiga printing is actually processing the data ready to print. Given that the speed advantages of USB printing are not huge (although a 10% speed up on a 15 minute print job is not to be sniffed at) and currently most printers have parallel and USB support.

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**The Highway is about as small as a Zorro card can be!**

**The Highway installed in an A3000 desktop. The card is connected to the USB ports by the two light coloured cables.**
it also shows when any device was added or removed from the bus and what class driver it was bound to. I should mention here that the log is particularly humorous, here are a few examples:

Sys:Storage/DosDrivers/UMSD support. Scanners and some drawer. You can edit this DosDriver to point to the correct unit of the usbscsi.devce for your device.

digital cameras are commonly vendor specific devices. IOSpirit have announced that they are working on Poseidon ... command line program to download pictures from webcams based on the STV680 chip, for example the Aiptek Pencam series.

With my card reader when you mount the device by double clicking on the DOSDriver a bad disk icon appears until you insert a valid memory card. Then ... to connecting a camera via the serial port this is hugely faster, as the best you’ll get on serial is about 14KB/s.

According to the E3B website USB ZIP100 and 250 drives work with the Highway (although you may need a self powered hub). Currently the ... more enjoyable. When I’m ready to upgrade I can consider any camera with a removable memory card (almost all of them).

bound to each device and if necessary release the binding (I guess this might be useful in the future if there was more than one driver for a device). There is also a button which displays more information about the selected device. The classes page shows the USB class drivers available with a brief description and how many devices are currently using each driver. When new class drivers are developed an Add button allows them to be registered with Poseidon. There is a Configure button on the Classes page but none of the currently supplied classes have any configuration options. The last page is called Config and only shows the configuration options available.

At the bottom of the Trident window is a list which shows a log of events since the Poseidon was started. This is handy because you can look back and see exactly in what order devices were recognised.

Pressing the Help key within Trident brings up Poseidon’s extensive AmigaGuide documentation, this provides information on using Trident, the class and hardware drivers. I found it complete and well written. The Highway package also comes with a print document with the hardware installation.

Conclusion
From the very start the Highway has impressed me, the board itself is high quality, and it is accompanied with well written installation documentation. Having used

Pros
+ High quality.
+ Reliable software.
+ Useful set of drivers.

Cons
- Keyboard and mouse drivers currently simple.

Dealing with the rat’s nest of cables behind your Amiga is always a problem. Neil Bothwick seems to have found an interesting solution to this perennial problem.

C

Computer cases are increasingly used to house good on a shelf in a shop, so all the messy stuff like input/output ports is hidden at the back. This is fine for things like keyboards, printers, modems and many other devices. You want their cables out of sight, and you don’t need easy access to them very often. There are some things you may want more frequent access to. Digital camera users will want access to serial and (hopefully) USB ports. Gamers may want to use different controllers for different games. Anyone who likes to listen to MP3s late at night, or play noisy games, may want to replace the speakers with headphones. All of these are a pain in the neck (or wherever, with a standard tower case).

FrontX provides a solution. It extends selected ports form the back of your computer to the front, housing them in a 5" drive bay. There are two elements to the kit, the first is a chassis that fits in a drive bay.

Just slot in the ports you need.

FrontX is compatible with any computer including Amigas.

This has a flap to cover the ports and a plastic cover to prevent dust getting in.

Hardware
FrontX is totally hardware independent. It will work on any computer that has a spare 5" bay and standard connectors. All the parts are sold separately, so you can tailor it to fit your needs exactly. The starter kit costs £29.80 (about $50), the chassis alone is £10.90 (£17.50) and most port extenders are £5-10 (£8-£17). FrontX can be ordered from http://www.frontx.com and prices include shipping.

The board for about a month now both it and the software have been very reliable, even though this is the first release it feels like a mature product. A useful combination of drivers are provided, for many Amigans just having the ability to use a modern digital camera will make the purchase of the Highway and a flash card reader. It seems likely that in the next few months more and improved class drivers will appear making the Highway an even more attractive proposition.

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We are clearing our stocks of Classic Amiga hardware and software in preparation for the AmigaOneG3-SE. Stocks of many items are already low - so get them now if you want to secure a bargain. When they're gone, they're gone!
The Feeble Files

It's about time we had a new point and click adventure on the Amiga. Sam Byford thinks EPIC Interactive's latest port will keep fans of the genre quiet for a while.

You will notice that there is a complete Solution text contains a complete Solution text file and another directory with ten save files in it taken from various versions through the game. These are here to help you in case you become completely stuck at some point in the game, but as with any cheat would spoil the fun of the game if you use them.

Installation of Feeble Files could not be easier - open up the CD contents and double click the "Feebleinstall" icon, it will then copy the needed contents to the hard drive in a place of your choosing which will take up about 700mb of space. To run the game just click on Feeble's head (a rather large icon). You will need CU2 in the drive to play the game. Personally I find this kind of dependence on CDs a real pain so if you have a big enough hard drive I would recommend that you copy the contents of the 2nd CD to a directory of your choosing and then make an assign "Assign Feeble2: Movies:Feeble2". This is also easy to do at this stage but if it gets you started! You will notice that there is a gold coloured box that covers the whole icon. This is the Feeble's Beebrain system. It holds the rules of the Omniverse (which puts it somewhere between the minimum and recommended specs) the game is more than playable. However it is still somewhat jerky which, considering this is only an 8bit game in 64x480 is quite surprising! I would have expected much more fluid screen scanning and animation playing from a game of this calibre. As an example look at "Zerf!" (another game from Clickboom) this is of similar graphics and size but the screen scanning is perfect, no stuttering like in Feeble Files. That said it is not too bad and I have seen parts of it that I actually missed was a lot of head turning and hand waving but still, perfection would have been nice!

The sound in the game is fine, if overused at times. While walking through the main town you get the voice of the Omnibrain coming over the tannoy system ... voice several times already. Thankfully that is confined to that one area out of all those I have encountered so far.

The graphics are detailed and humorous and look great even though they are only 8bit. Now call me picky, but this is actually where the game falls down in my estimation! The inventory of items you see, as previously mentioned, is stored within Oracle. To get an item for interaction you have to move the mouse up to the Oracle icon, click it, move the mouse back down to the required object, then click "OFF" to return to the playing screen and then click on the item or person you want to try to get that object to interact with. A lengthy process at the best of times. However, when you're in a situation where you Know something should interact with an item but your not sure exactly what then you have to repeat this process over and over till you (maybe find the correct combination! Not clever, a much better solution is the Clickboom game Nightlong works, in Nightlong you move the mouse pointer to the bottom of the screen and a bar pops up with the inventory items in that order, you then click on the object which is both efficient and painless. If Feeble Files did things this way then you would have all the available Oracle processes inside that icon but the item handling would be made much easier.

Time to get interactive.

The mouse pointer is actually a multi-tasking item, which with a right click of the mouse turns from a "walk-to" icon (the default setting) to a "look-at" pick-up "action" and "double-action" icon. All of these are pretty obvious in their uses but I'll clarify the use of the double action icon throughout the game Feeble will need to use certain objects with Oracle (such as the doll with the transporter at the start of the game), that is where the "double-action mouse" comes into use. You first click on the Oracle item you want Feeble to interact with, then on the other and Feeble will try to use them together with either a positive or negative result.

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It was only in issue 6 that I reviewed my then new Sony 17” CRT monitor, so why only 18 months later or so am I reviewing another monitor I hear you saying? The answer is space, or in fact the sheer lack of it to be precise. On my desk at home I had a 17” CRT monitor, a printer, a fastidiously neat scanner and my wife’s iMac and keyboard (my keyboard is on a separate pull out shell luckily) which made it very tight for room to work but just about enough to get away with it. Then my audio setup died, the significance is that it was a unit that sat beneath my monitor and therefore took no extra space. Looking around I couldn’t find anything like it and the alternative speakers would not remotely fit on my desk, so what should I do?

I had been very interested in the latest TFT monitors available and had noticed the prices dropping quite considerably. On further investigation I found that specs of such monitors can vary quite a bit according to price. I also was informed that playing games on such monitors was unbearable unless response times were very quick (see boxout). When I spotted the NEC 1550M with good specifications (see panel) and built in multi-media speakers I thought to myself that would meet all my demands in one swoop, so here we are!

Big is Small!
The NEC 1550M (Multi-media) is a 15” TFT monitor which has a diagonal visible screen measurement of 15.1” which is almost the same area as a 17” CRT (Cathode Ray Tube) monitor, the reason for this is that CRT monitors sizes quoted is the actual size of the physical tube which is partially surrounded by the monitor casing. On most 17” CRT monitors you end up with about 15.8 inches of viewable screen, so you can see it is not much difference in size. One other thing to note is that 15” TFT’s have a maximum screen resolution of 1024 x 768 so if you like to use resolutions above this you will need a 17” TFT monitor and they cost around £550 or so. The entire flat panel area of the monitor measures 34.5cm horizontally by 20cm vertically and that includes a 2cm border down each side, a 2.5cm border at the top and a 5cm border at the bottom that has the control buttons and speakers within it. The entire footprint including the screen panel and base of the monitor is 34.5cm width by 16.5cm depth which is much less

**Developer**
NEC-Mitsubishi
www.nec-monitors.com

**Supplier**
Micro Warehouse
www.microwarehouse.co.uk

**Price**
£41 Incl. VAT

**Compatibility**
Graphics card with 15pin VGA connection.

**Specification**

| Screen Size: 15.1” |
| Max. Resolution: 1024x768 |
| Brightness: 300 cd/m² |
| Contrast Ratio: 450:1 |
| Response Time: 25ms |
| Colour: 24bit (16 million) |

**Viewing Angles**
Vertical: 110°
Horizontal: 150°

**Input Signal**
Scan rates: 31.5-60 kHz
Refresh rates: 56.2-75.1 Hz

**Features**
Built-in stereo speakers.
Headphone socket.
Powered 4 port USB hub.

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As you can see from the photo the 15.1” TFT display (right) gives almost the same screen area as a 17” CRT monitor (left).
space than my 17” CRT required I can tell you.

**Feel Good**
The first time I connected this little gem to my Amiga and powered it up I was rather pleased by the image quality. The contrast ratios were excellent and I could see the screen perfectly – mega cool! This meant that I didn’t have to sit and fiddle with the controls to get it perfect like I did with my CRT monitor and in fact the first time I loaded an Amiga game I had seen one at World of Amiga in 1999 (owned by Kickstarter member Chris Green in my memory serves me correctly) that refused to show PAL screens despite them being put through a separate Doubling on his A3000, maybe they are less tolerant than CRT monitors when the lowest scan rates are used. But in the end it worked fine with all the software I could throw at it, and in fact the game screens did not suffer much at all with the stated response rate problems I mentioned earlier.

The only game that showed any slight effects of response time blurring was Freespace and this is probably due to the high contrast within the game (from the darkness of space to the bright light coloured craft) but it was not bad enough to distract you from the game. Another concern of mine was what the viewing angles would be limited to, and I can tell you they are very good with a vertical angle of 110° and a horizontal one of 150°. This means that you would have to be some way off the centre of the screen before the image fades an unacceptable amount, so unless you’re one of these strange people who uses their monitor at awkward angles it won’t be a problem!

and by Golly it is Good
All in all I am very impressed with this monitor, it is sharp and clear, it uses about a quarter of the space of my previous monitor (and weighs a lot less) and therefore makes it more practical for carting down to SEAP (http://www.seal-amiga.co.uk) meetings every fortnight. The only negative thing I can really think of is the price (£411), but you can pick up TFT monitors now from about £270 so things are better than say a year ago when a price tag of around £700 was very common.

**Wh't Important**
Each pixel in a TFT display can be individually controlled to show the colour required, unlike a CRT monitor the display does not have to be regularly refreshed. This means that the refresh rate that is so important to prevent a flicker on a CRT monitor is not relevant to a TFT. You might see refresh rates quoted on TFT monitor specifications but this is merely the signal the display can accept from your graphics card. The key measure of the quality of a TFT display is how quickly it can change the state (colour and brightness displayed) of an individual pixel, this is called the response time. On displays with a slow response time moving objects on the screen, for example scrolling windows, games and even the mouse pointer can blur as the display tries to keep up. This effect is particularly noticeable on monitors of high contrast where the pixels have to change from one extreme to the other (dark to light or vice versa). The response time is usually quoted in milliseconds so you probably won’t find many displays with higher than 40ms response, my monitor has a 25ms response time and the lower the time the better the monitor will display moving graphics. You might see the response time measured in two parts, build and collapse, these are the times for the element to go from black to white and back again. Generally the overall response time is the sum of these two. If you see a spec. with an unusually small response time check they are not just quoting the expand or collapse time alone.

**The Angle of the Dangle**
LCD displays have a limited viewing angle, when you look at the display from the side, from above or below the display appears dimmer and the colours begin to change. Manufacturers specify the viewing angle of their displays and it is good to look for one with as wide angles as you can find. Again on modern displays you can find viewing angles of 150° or more which in my experience is fine for normal viewing.

**Do you Amiga?**
Most LCD monitors will run with no problems on any Amiga with a graphics card, you may need to tweak your screenmode settings in the graphics driver software (CGXmode or Picasso96Mode) to meet the input specifications of the monitors. As I mentioned before you will also want to use the native resolution of the monitor for most of your screens. I don’t know of an LCD display that will sync to the standard 15kHz Amiga screenmodes (PAL, NTSC) however if you have a scrubber or flider you have a good chance it will work (my monitor does, I would advise you check compatibility before you buy if 15kHz compatibility is important to you). Another option is that some LCD monitors have a composite video in addition to the graphics card input which is intended for video equipment (video cameras, VCRs etc.) so if you can get a screen like this you could hook it up to the Amiga’s composite video out for 15kHz screenmodes.

Some TFT monitors have a DVI (Digital Video Interface) connector in addition to or instead of a standard 15pin SVGA connector. DVI can send digital signals direct to the monitor but it requires a graphics card with a DVI connection. No Amiga graphics cards to date have DVI so make sure any monitor you buy has at least one standard VGA connector.
AmigaOS has never really offered an easy method of dealing with lots of windows on screen, for example finding a window when you know that is completely obscured by another. In the past small screen resolutions and multiple screens meant that most people ran all their programs on separate screens and seldom had too many windows to worry about. In these days of high resolution graphics card displays it is becoming more common to run many programs on a single screen (often the Workbench screen) and this means it is handy to have a way to easily reveal a particular window. In Windows 95 Microsoft’s solution to this problem was the taskbar which lists all the running applications and allows them to be easily brought to the front. Many programmers have written programs to bring similar functionality to AmigaOS. In this roundup we look at four of the best examples and see what they have to offer.

**StartMenu**

**Developer:** Martin Elsner  
**License:** Freeware  
**WWW:** http://www.martin-elsner.de

StartMenu offers pretty much a direct clone of the Windows start menu and task bar on the Amiga right down to a (rather ugly in my opinion) ‘Windows XP’ default look. The program is configured by a neat Reaction based preferences program which is installed in your Prefs drawer by default.

Using the preferences program you can add items and sub menus to the start menu. Shell, Workbench and AREXX commands are supported. The program name and icon shown in the menu can be set independently of the filename and icon. Programs can be easily added by dragging their icons from Workbench. You can make additional sub-menus to group programs as you wish. Internal StartMenu commands can be added to the menu too. Only two commands are supplied, quit, which quits the program and the option menu showing the currently running commodities. Each commodity in the menu has a sub-menu showing StartMenu, Window, Hide, Deactivate/Activate and Kill options. One feature that StartMenu lacks is the facility to explore drives within the menu, personally I don’t find this feature very useful so it’s no great loss, of course your opinion may differ.

For quick access commonly used program icons can be added to the left hand side of the task bar where they load with a single click. At the opposite end of the task bar a clock is shown, moving the mouse over the StartMenu in its ‘Windows XP’ default look. Note that is shows windows and a clock shows the date and clicking it opens a pop-up menu where you can load the prefs program or quit StartMenu. Between the two is the taskbar area, here a button is displayed for each window on the current screen, clicking on a button brings its window to the front. With many windows open the task bar can get crowded and the window titles truncated, as far as I can see there is no way to see the complete window title. StartMenu can be configured to open on all public screens, an option other open screens to be listed along with windows on the taskbar. These options can be very handy if you can easily open programs or switch windows and screens to screen to other applications. A preferences option lets you exclude Windows and Screens from the taskbar.

The appearance and operation of StartMenu is quite configurable, colours, fonts and background images can all be changed but there is no option to change settings for individual menus. I was also disappointed to see that the icons for the start button, folders in the menu and those used on the task bar buttons are hard coded so you have to replace the defaults to change the look (I think it would be nicer to pick your own choices in prefs). On the plus side the bar can be hidden until your mouse pointer reaches the edge of the screen and you can also choose to have the bar at the top if you wish.

If you’re after a taskbar that sticks fairly closely to the Windows design, offering mostly cosmetic options then StartMenu is a good choice. If you share my opinions on the Windows XP look set aside some time to re-configure the default look though!

**ScreenTab**

**Developer:** Michael Link  
**License:** Freeware  
**WWW:** http://www.martin-elsner.de

ScreenTab’s main purpose in life is to let you easily swap between open screens and windows using two different key combinations. By default Left Amiga and Tab switches to the next screen, pressing the key combination brings up the name of the next screen in a window in the centre of the current screen, pressing Tab again cycles to the next screen and releasing the Amiga key brings the selected screen to the front. Bringing a window to the current screen to the front works in a similar way except the hotkey is different (Left Amiga and by default).

These features work well but they’re not all that ScreenTab has to offer, move your mouse to the bottom edge of the screen and a task bar with start button appears. The taskbar cannot be set to appear permanently and must be at the bottom of the screen. However it does appear on every screen for easy screen swapping and launching of programs away from the Workbench screen. The taskbar only displays buttons for the currently open screens, there is no facility to list the open windows on the taskbar. However a plug-in is provided to add a window list to the start menu. At the right hand side of the task bar an icon is shown, the format can be altered from the prefs program.

The start menu can contain three types of object, programs for quick access, a sub-menu that adds additional features and sub-menus. This is all configured from a neat MUI based preferences program (ScreenTab itself doesn’t use MUI). You can add programs and plug-ins anywhere on the top level of the start menu on a sub-menu. The menu can be reorganised using drag and drop. Programs can be added to the default by dropping, installing a plug-in may change your Workbench icons on the preferences editor, if you want an item to have an accompanying icon you must select it separately as ScreenTab does not use the program’s icon. A selection of suitable icons are included in the ScreenTab distribution.

Plug-ins are used to add powerful features to the ScreenTab start menu, several are supplied with ScreenTab. When the program was Shareware the author held back several plug-ins as an incentive to register, he has now uploaded these plug-ins to the Aminet site. A plug-in to the Ext.,_lha archive.

The Commodities plug-in adds a sub-menu containing all the currently running commodities, each commodity has a sub-menu containing the control options in the OS Commodities Exchange program. The previously mentioned Windows plug-in lists the windows on the current screen and brings a window to the front when you select it. A unique plug-in to ScreenTab is Bookmarks, this displays your web browser’s history in a sub menu and then loads the URL in your browser when you select an item. The docs for this plug-in show how to set it up for Firefox but as it uses AREXX you should be able to make it work with any browser. Other plug-ins offer options to restore the Amiga (with optional confirmation), flush used libraries etc from memory and paste the current clipboard into the keyboard buffer (adding simple clipboard paste support to most programs).

Probably the most complex plug-in is the Directory Walker, this allows you to explore a volume or drawer from an item on the start menu. ScreenTab uses the FileID.library to identify the type of each file displayed and therefore the hotkey is the appropriate one. For example you could define Show and Edit options for a graphics file format and link them to your favourite viewer and graphics editor, however the file format is can be defined for files which are not recognised and these can be appended to any file specific actions so you don’t have to define common actions for every filetype. The actions configuration file is plain text and has to be changed in an editor, however the format is simple and a good example file is supplied.

The look of ScreenTab is fairly fixed, you can change the fonts and icons used but not colours. There are no facilities for background patterns or changing borders. If you want a light weight solution with a surprising amount of features then ScreenTab works very well. Personally I would have liked windows shown on the task bar and it’s probably not ideal for those who like customising the look of their system.

**Workbench 2000**

**Developer:** Emmanuel Dausse  
**License:** Freeware  
**WWW:** http://www.memory-overdrive.com

Workbench 2000 is unique among the other taskbar/start menu clones mentioned here in two ways, it is a stand alone program rather than using plug-ins to add its functionality and it uses MUI for its task bar and preferences program (the others that use MUI only do so for their preferences program). Being a stand alone program has some advantages in that it is easier to install and easier and all the options are immediately available. However any future expansion is up to the program author. Using MUI for the task bar is also a drawback though, it allows the user to access all MUI settings (assuming MUI is already installed) the program and the MUI system and the classes used by Workbench 2000 are loaded all the time it is running.

At the top of the start menu you can add items to launch programs, these can be split into sub-menus. Programs can be added by drag and drop and another MUI command lists all AREXX commands, CLI commands and script files from menu items. If you have an icon datatype installed Workbench 2000 can display the program icon next to its entry, you can also choose any other datatypes supported image. One minor quibble is that the keyboard buffer (adding simple clipboard paste support to most programs).
The look of AmiStart is very configurable, all the icons can be changed as you wish to the background image and colours of each menu, sub-menu and the bar. Fonts are configurable too and the latest version even supports anti-aliasing with truetype fonts. If that wasn't flash enough you can also add a configurable level of transparency to the menus and bar! That said a few aspects are fixed, the bar must be at the bottom of the screen and there is no option for hiding the bar until the pointer reaches the edge of the screen.

Overall AmiStart is extremely powerful and comprehensive, I hope in the future the author will add support to the menu (for those like me who can't abide "sticky" menus) and perhaps a proper task bar. With the excellent external tool and module support perhaps some third party programmers will come up with some new plug-ins too (an SDK is included in the archive).

Other Options
If you don't like the idea of a full task bar and start menu there are other utilities which make screen and window management easier and a lot less cluttered. AmiDock for example provides a task bar, move the mouse over the menu items to open sub menus and then click on your choice. To drag files around the screen it's as simple as clicking on the file icon and then clicking and dragging to the desired location. AmiDock uses the popupmenu.library (which you need to install separately) which has a preferences program giving plenty of control over the look of the pop-up windows. For example you can change the colours, border style and even add drop shadows (both default and true transparent types are available). You can also change the way menus operate so you can have "sticky" menus if you prefer.

I found DepthMenu worked well and placed the window selection menu in a very logical yet unobtrusive place. If you want easy window and screen selection without clutter it's a good choice.

Reviews
Workbench 2000 shows the windows of all screens on its task bar, that can be a lot of buttons...
O

n the Amiga, there were only two ways to communicate with friends in real-time: ICQ and IRC (as detailed in issue 9 of Clubbed). Now there are five ways to communicate on your Amiga, but with just one chat client, and that’s Jabberwocky! Jabberwocky allows you to communicate with your friends, not just on ICQ and IRC, but also Yahoo, MSN, and through Jabber itself.

Setting Jabberwocky up is relatively simple. Each time you fire it up, a window will come up asking you for your Jabber ID and your password. Because this is your first time you will need to come up with an ID of your choice, for example: “JohnSmith@jabber.at”. You can also have “JohnSmith@jabber.org”, although jabber.at tends to be more reliable. Once you’ve chosen your ID, you will need to enter in a password. You’ll need to do this carefully, as you cannot see what your typing in. Once you’ve done this, click on Register and you should be in! Each time you fire up Jabberwocky from now on, you should already have your ID entered in for you, and all you need to do is enter in your password and click on connect. In order to make use of the various chat protocols (otherwise known as transports), you’ll need to register for each of them. This can be done by going to “Windows” in the menu, then go down to “Agents list”, which will bring up a window with the available transports, and what you are able to do (i.e. Register, conferencing, and save messages). Fill in the required details, and bearing in mind that you may already have to be registered, so it may require access to a PC (cough!). Once your account has registered with Jabberwocky, a subscription window will appear, click on “accept” to accept it (it does help). It should now appear in your contact list with a light bulb next to it, telling you that it’s working and you’re online with it. If it’s ICQ you subscribed to then it should appear as “ICQ jabber @ registered”, or “yahoo jabber @ registered” if you’ve registered with Yahoo Messenger.

To add a contact to your list, you need to go to “Roster” in the menu, and select “Add Contact”. Where it says “Jabber ID” enter the address of the user you want to speak to, go to “Roster” in the menu, and go down to “Chat”, and a chat window will open up. Whatever you say is in italics, and whatever the person at the other end says is in normal style text. With ICQ, I recommend you make a note of ICQ UIN’s, and who is what number, to save yourself from embarrassment! If you suspect that anything isn’t working properly on Jabberwocky, go to “Windows” in the menu, and go down to “Console”, then make sure “Watch XML Traffic” is ticked. This way, all activity from Jabberwocky, as well as the presence of other users and traffic of messages between users show up in this window. Any errors usually show up in this window too. Unfortunately there are some features of Jabberwocky that are yet to be implemented, such as the ability to have conferencing, and save messages. But “Flush” does actually work as I found out (Wipes conversations in chat windows).

Overall I am quite impressed status by going to the “Presence” tab in the main Jabberwocky window. To chat to someone, click once on the user you want to speak to, go to “Roster” in the menu, and go down to “Chat”, and a chat window will open up. What you say is in italics, and whatever the person at the other end says is in normal style text. With ICQ, I recommend you make a note of ICQ UIN’s, and who is what number, to save yourself from embarrassment! If you suspect that anything isn’t working properly on Jabberwocky, go to “Windows” in the menu, and go down to “Console”, then make sure “Watch XML Traffic” is ticked. This way, all activity from Jabberwocky, as well as the presence of other users and traffic of messages between users show up in this window. Any errors usually show up in this window too. Unfortunately there are some features of Jabberwocky that are yet to be implemented, such as the ability to have conferencing, and save messages. But “Flush” does actually work as I found out (Wipes conversations in chat windows).

If you don’t see what you want, just ask! Our range is always growing!

Jabberwocky brings together all your instant messaging contacts even if they use different networks.
**Tables Tutorial**

By Robert Williams

One of the major new features of PageStream 4.1 is the tables tool which allows you to create complex tables of data and text in a PageStream document and even has some basic spreadsheet features. The table feature is currently only documented by a few notes in the 4.1 readme file so I thought it would be useful to demonstrate creating a table in this tutorial.

Creating a new table is as easy as drawing a rectangle.

### Table Cell Edit Palette

|----------------------------------|-----------|----------|--------|----------------------|--------|----------|---------|-------|------|

- **Accept**
- **Cell Reference**
- **Width**
- **Height**
- **Add Col.**
- **Add Row**
- **Merge**
- **Line**

By right-clicking on one of the table cells you can select several options:

- **Insert Row**
- **Insert Column**
- **Delete Row**
- **Delete Column**

Currently the implementation of PageStream tables in formulas has a number of limitations, the most obvious being that the formulas are not stored with the table itself.
### Support

To finish the table off we’ll add a border to the whole table, to do this select it with the pointer tool. Choose ‘Line & Fill’ from the ‘Object’ menu or press the ‘L’ key, in the window choose the ‘line’ tab, set the ‘Weight’ to ‘4 pts’ and the ‘Color’ to ‘Red’.

#### Functionality

Here is the complete list of mathematical functions currently available in PageStream tables:

- ABS
- ARCCOS
- ARCTAN
- AVERAGE, AVG
- COS
- EXP
- INT
- LN
- LOG
- MAX
- MIN
- SIN
- SUM
- TAN

Nearby finished... the table with just the text formatting to add. The formatting of the displayed numbers. By default they are displayed at four decimal places and any zeros after the decimal point are hidden. This can make the results look a bit messy. Also there is no option to have a leading or trailing symbol for currency or percentage values.

#### Formatting

Next up is some formatting to make the table look a bit more interesting. In a PageStream table you can set the background fill and outline of each individual cell and also set the fill and line style of the table as a whole. By default each cell has a solid white background and a thin black border. To edit the style of a cell choose the modify tool and click on the cell, you can shift click on multiple cells to edit them all at once. The first thing I usually do is to remove all the cell borders, to do this click on one cell with the modify tool and then shift click on all the others. At the right hand side of the Edit palette click on one of the line buttons surrounding the box (fill) button. In the Line and Fill window that appears you can change the line style and colour, in this case we want to turn the line off so click on the “Stroked” check box until it is cleared (not a tick or a cross). Click OK and follow the same procedure for the other three line styles.

To clear the cell borders click on one of the cells to clear the selection, now you should have a bare table with an outline around the outside. I’m going to make the heading lines and Average Saving lines red, using the modify tool click on one of the cells in the top three rows and then shift click on all the others.

### Text Formatting

The last job is to format the text, this works exactly like any text formatting in PageStream. Use the text tool to select the text you want to format then change the options using the edit palette, type Line & Fill requester and other options on the Type menu. I selected ‘Product Information’ with the text tool and set the fill colour to ‘White’ in the Line & Fill requester (accessed from the ‘Type’ menu or by pressing Ctrl-L), then I set the style to Bold by clicking the ‘B’ button on the ‘Edit’ palette.

**TIP** You can select text in several cells at once by holding the ‘Alt’ key while you select each block. Then you can apply formatting to several blocks at once. ‘You may find it easier to apply the format you want to the text in one cell and then use the Eye-dropper tool to copy it to other cells. To do this click the eye dropper tool then Shift-Click on the text with the format you want to copy and click (without shift) on the text you want to give this format. I used the eye dropper technique to apply the white and bold text format to all the heading cells (with the red backgrounds).

**NOTE:** If you increase the font size of the text it can spill over the bottom edge of the cell, to avoid this you need to make the cell height larger. On merged cells this will cause the problem I mentioned before where the table suddenly becomes very wide (the first column is set to the width of the merged cell). To cure this you will have to re-size the cells manually (either by sizing the whole table or individual cells) remember to set the size in non-merged cells, if you size another merged cell the problem will re-occur.

Bearing the above in mind select the ‘Media Price List’ text in the top cell and use the Edit palette to set the text size to ‘24pt’. Then, in modify mode, change the height (H) of the top cell to ‘12mm’, when you press return twice the height should change as expected but the width of the table will now be much too wide. I found that the text in the cell also disappeared (this didn’t happen when I changed the size of an ordinary cell). To correct the size problem select one of the single cells in the left hand column (the ‘Description cell for example’) and set the width to ‘55mm’. You will then probably need to adjust the width of the table slightly using the pointer tool. Now choose the text tool and re-enter the title, it should remember the text formatting you set.

I hope this tutorial is helpful to people who have PageStream 4.1 and wondered how the table tool works and also shows most of the possible options to people thinking about buying the program or upgrades. As you can see there are currently some limitations and bugs in the table feature but it does work well for the most part and is far more powerful than tables in any other Amiga program.

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**PageStream 4.1**

- Quark wishes... PageStream features!

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PageStream 4.1</strong></td>
<td>£150.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Basic &amp; Geo Borders</strong></td>
<td>£55.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Robert Williams helps you do something a bit more interesting with those holiday photos.

As we’re in the middle of the holiday season I thought it would be good to have a tutorial that could be applied to holiday photos. One of the utilities commonly supplied with the Amiga is ImageFX but there’s no reason you couldn’t apply the same technique in Photogenics or ArtEffect.

Before you can begin of course you must have a set of photos you want to assemble into a panorama. As you can probably tell from my photos I’m no expert photographer, to be honest I’m just your average snapper! So I’m not going to pretend to offer any advice on the actual photography. All I will say is that your job in assembling the panorama will be made much easier if you keep the camera settings constant as you take each photo so they are all evenly exposed. To avoid the large steps I have in the positions of my photos you need to pan the camera on an even path, a tripod would help in many situations I’m sure.

As my source material I have a four photo panorama of St. Ives bay taken while I was on holiday in July. If you want to try this tutorial with the same photos as I used you can download them from the Issue 12 page of the Total Amiga website.

So without further ado load up ImageFX (I’m using 4.5 here but I think everything here should apply to any 4.x version) and let’s get started.

**Let’s get Started**

Before you can begin of course you must have a set of photos you want to assemble into a panorama.

**Step by Step Merge**

1. **Find a landmark.**
2. **Position the image roughly and turn on transparency.**
3. **Nudge the image to get an exact match.**
4. **Remove transparency.**

**Creating a Photo in ImageFX**

Click on the “Interface” button, in the toolbar then in the “Size” palette that opens click “Scale”. In the “Scale” image window set “Mode” to “Border” and make sure “Aspect” is set to “Ignore Aspect”. Now we need to add a border equal to the width of the additional images we are going to add. I have a total of four images, as the border command applies to both sides of the image I will need to make the border on each side wide enough for three images, so that is six images in total. As the first image is already included we must add that so we want the buffer to be seven times the current width. To do this I just typied 700 into the first “Percent” box and press return, then click “Okay”.

To crop off the unwanted space on the left hand side you need to zoom out to see the whole image, to do this click on the “–” icon in the image window’s bottom border or on the toolbar until you can see a border to the left and right. Make sure you can see the whole image including the borders on both sides because the crop function only works on the visible area. Click “Crop” in the size palette then, on the image, drag the middle left handle to the right until it just reaches the left of the photo, don’t worry about being too accurate as we’ll crop the image again later. Click the “Crop” button in the “Crop” requester.

**Blend**

What we want to do is to add a gradient to the left side of the image making it gradually transparent. First we’ll make the gradient we’re going to use take up the whole photo on your palette window and see if you have a black and white colour next to each other. If there aren’t a perfect match you should be able to see if objects on one layer are misaligned with those on the other by a few pixels. It will probably help to zoom in again to at least actual size (indicated by 1:1 after the filename in the Image window title bar) for this operation. To nudge the layer a pixel or two in a direction in turn from your good position just to check there isn’t an even better match.

To see the effect this has click the “Swap” button in the “Alpha” palette again.

Click the “Blend” ½ back up to the far right and check out your handy work (at this point don’t worry if the colour balance of the two photos doesn’t match), unless you have done a fantastic job of lining up the panorama there will probably still be some mismatches. I found the best way to deal with this problem was to blend the two images slightly into each other. For this we use the alpha channel which allows us to control the translucency of the image. To do this we need to give the layer an alpha channel, click on the “Alpha” button in the toolbar then on “Create” in the palette and finally on “Matte”. Next take a look at the Alpha by clicking on “Swap”. You should see a plain white image, if you need to zoom out to see it then click “Okay”.

Now size the image window so you can see the whole alpha channel with a small border at the bottom and right edges. In the bottom border position the mouse pointer along the image at the point you want the fade to start. Exactly where you start will depend on how much your images overlap, I was able to have about 100 pixels. Now click and drag the box up to the left until you cover the whole left hand edge of the alpha channel, don’t worry if you move the window border, then release the mouse button. Your alpha channel should now have a smooth fade on the left edge. To see the effect this has click the “Swap” button in the palette again.

Click on the “Alpha” button in the toolbar then in the “Size” palette that opens click “Scale”. In the “Scale” image window set “Mode” to “Border” and make sure “Aspect” is set to “Ignore Aspect”. Now we need to add a border equal to the width of the additional images we are going to add. I have a total of four images, as the border command applies to both sides of the image I will need to make the border on each side wide enough for three images, so that is six images in total. As the first image is already included we must add that so we want the buffer to be seven times the current width. To do this I just typied 700 into the first “Percent” box and press return, then click “Okay”.

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**Match**

No matter how careful you have been in keeping your camera settings constant you will probably find that the colour balance of the photos which make up your panorama needs some adjustment to get them to match up and look like...
one image. If you have been able to keep each photo as a separate layer then you can work on each photo in turn and decide which colour balance, the aim will then be to match the others to this photo.

With my photos I hadn’t followed my own advice and left the camera in automatic mode, this gives me four photos with noticeably different colour balances. It doesn’t help that the right side of the scene is overcast and the left side is in bright sunshine. In my selection the left hand photo is pretty over exposed and looks quite washed out where as the right one is rather grey and dull. So I picked the second photo as the one I wanted to try and match it, nice and bright without been over exposed.

Starting with the first image you want to balance select its layer in the “Layer Manager”, I’m working on the left hand image so in my case it’s the “Background” layer. Then we can use ImageFX’s colour tools, the basic adjustments are in the “Balance” window accessed from the toolbar. In the “Color Balance” window enter the preview thumbnail by clicking the “-” button until you can see a top and bottom border (about 1-8 for me) then click on the top thumbnail and drag it until you can see the photo your may need to drag a few times. Now click the “Realtime Update” check box so you can see the difference your changes make in the lower thumbnail. In this window the R, G, and B sliders adjust the intensity of the primary colours, “V” is brightness, “C” contrast and “G” gamma. The gamma is often a useful tool because it adjusts the brightness of the middle tones without effecting the very light and dark colours which would normally be washed out or merged together respectively. In this case I have left it at 80% and reduced the brightness by about “30” and increasing the contrast by “10” to pep the colours up a bit. This worked well on most areas, especially the sea and town. But the sky was still too light and blue by about 20% which had been over exposed in the photo losing its true brightness and colour.

The only option seemed to be to treat the sky on its own and make the blue more intense. To select the sky I used ImageFX’s flood region tool, on the main toolbar click the cycle gadget at the top of the sea, this should select most of the sea and sky area with just a few exceptions. Then switch the region mode cycle gadget to “Box”, hold down the Alt key and draw a box over the areas in the sea and sky that didn’t get automatically selected. Now click on the “Balance” window, I found a contrast setting of 20 combined with a brightness of 10 gave a good match.

Set the region control to “Full” and then choose the final photo as the basis, this one is considerably darker than the rest and in this case I found I could add about 10% to the whole thing without the bushes getting too bright. So it’s just a case of opening the “Balance” window and setting brightness to “57” and contrast to “25”.

When you’re happy with the overall look of the panorama you can flatten it into a single image. If you wish to keep the layered image make sure you save it as an INGF file before flattening. Then choose “Flatten Layers” from the “Layer Manager” pop-up menu. Once the image is flattened you can apply any effects you want to the whole image. If you wish you can also crop to remove the uneven borders making the final panorama look as much as possible like one photo.

When you crop remember to zoom the image so you can see the whole area you want to crop out without scrolling.

Overall I’m quite pleased with the way this panorama turned out, especially as I hadn’t given much thought to keeping the camera settings consistent between shots and I didn’t use a tripod. There are a couple of areas where the colour balance could probably be improved if I had spent a bit more time on it, especially in the bushes on the first and last photos. You can also still make out the joins in the sea and sky again those transitions could be lost with a bit more work. So get out that digital camera and find some interesting panoramas to photograph!