Need More Space?

We guide you through choosing and preparing a new hard drive.

Issue 5, Spring 2000

Reviewed:
- fxPaint
- BurnIT
- MakeCD
- MasterISO
- AmiTradeCenter
- Wildfire 7 PPC
- WipeOut 2097
- Grand TV Amazing

Interviewed:
- Bill McEwen

Tutorials:
- CD Writing
- VGA to PAL Project
- Back to Basics: Shell
- Cinema 4D

CD-R Explained

Create your own music and data CDs on your Amiga with our simple guide.

For Amigans, By Amigans, On Amigas!
Got a question you’d like answered, or an opinion you’d like to share? Write to us and we’ll include it in a letters page.

Got a tip for other readers or even an article up your sleeve? Send it in and you could very well see your name in print.

Got a suggestion or comment on the magazine? Let us know and we’ll try and make Clubbed better for you.

By Robert Williams

This month I would like to talk about Amiga hardware and software dealers, as the subject of value for money and service quality seems to be a point of interest to our club members, at most of our meetings. People are always approaching me and asking why things cost so much money, when it has anything to do with the Amiga.

Well, I am not here to defend the “Amiga” dealers nor am I here as a spokesperson for all Amiga users, but I do feel there are two sides to every coin, and I shall try and make sense of it from both perspectives.

A typical member of SEAL will ask me the following questions.

1. Why do “Amiga” dealers sell accessories and cards for the price they do when PC dealers sell whole PC systems for less?
2. Why are graphics cards for the Amiga so expensive at the moment? It seems the most expensive cards have the latest turbo nutter bastard super 3D card for the PC cost so little.
3. Why do motherboard add-ons (clock header devices, scan doublers, I/O buffered interfaces etc.) cost so much?
4. Why are generic devices such as CD-ROM’s, hard drives, CDRW’s, Zip drives & digital cameras so expensive when bought from “Amiga” dealers compared to PC dealers?
5. Why does software on the Amiga cost so much, all my PC friends hardly pay anything?
6. Why when I have sent something back, do the dealers argue with me that the item is not faulty when I know it is?
7. Ok then lets try and answer them in order, the first, second and third questions all have a pretty similar answer. Nearly all Amiga hardware devices are mass produced generic items, by that I mean you won’t find them inside a PC anywhere and therefore ought to be designed, developed and tested by someone (not for free) and a machine has to be specifically tuned up for quite a limited production run. Also the individual components on the device are usually not industry standard and therefore are higher cost to purchase in the first place. That combined with the fact that only low numbers of units will be sold (probably only thousands at best) the final cost of any boards will be quite high, it cannot be avoided (look what happened to Phasered), I’m afraid we are stuck with it unless the Amiga has a sudden rise in popularity.

Question 4 is interesting because I can see no reason why any of the items listed should cost any more than at other dealers, maybe they are trying to bump up their profits to subsidise the low profits on other items, or maybe they think that they have us at mercy, as some people think that they are the only dealers to sell “Amiga Friendly” hardware, but if that is the case it just isn’t on it! Most of these dealers sell stuff for PC’s as well, so they are not relying on the Amiga exclusively for their income so knock it off guys! If you want to purchase such items as hard drives etc. then just shop around and get a good deal, but I would recommend that you join your local Amiga user group so that they can advise you on compatibility issues should they arise.

Question 6 are you sure? The software that comes out on the Amiga I believe is very well priced considering how many copies of the applications that they are likely to sell, most people that I know who have PC’s haven’t paid a single penny for 95% of the software that is sitting on their hard drives and why you ask, well the bottom line is that piracy is so rife on the PC it is out of control, no sooner than a game or application is released then it is copied and distributed! But unlike the Amiga even though the colossal amount of piracy going on, it will not cause the failure of the platform single handed due to the fact that nearly every business out there has PC’s with legitimate software on it and that means large volumes of software is still being sold.

The rest of the AGM was spent discussing the future of the club and some of the activities suggested for the future were:

- Fund raisers (raffles etc.)
- SEAL Sale
- Tutorial videos (hardware and software) Demos and Tutorials
- Amiga celebrity guests
- Inter-user group activities
- Beginners Workshops
- Social Activities

Since the AGM, we have been making an effort to have an activity, such as a tutorial or demonstration at every other meeting. These have included demonstrations of FreeBSD and Plan9 and a round-up of useful utilities. The round up was particularly interesting as several members had their own suggestions of programs they couldn’t live without. Hopefully they will feel inspired to demonstrate their choices in the future.

Another feature that was suggested at the AGM was beginner’s tutorials, in fact the committee was already planning to start these. To help with these tutorials SEAL has purchased an A1200, Blizzard 1230 accelerator and 8833MkII monitor so a basic system will always be available at meetings.

By the next issue of Clubbed (planned for early August) we will have full details, in the meantime announcements will be posted on the SEAL website.

SEAL held its Annual General Meeting in February, we had an excellent turn out with about 25 of our 30 plus members present.

The meeting started with Mick Sutton giving a summary of SEAL’s finances and Robert Williams outlining Clubbed’s finances and progress. Committee elections were then held. Mick Sutton, Robert Williams, Gary Storm and Jeff Martin were re-elected to their positions of Chairman and treasurer. Vice Chairman and magazine editor, Promotions Officer and Committee Member respectively. Sadly committee member Martin Miller has left SEAL, however we were pleased to welcome Roy Burton who was elected to fill the vacant position.

We also agreed that committee only meetings would be held several times a year to allow committee members to plan ahead.

We are planning to hold an Amiga event in the near future and currently we are working towards an early September date. The sale will take place on a Sunday at SEAL’s meeting venue: Northlands Park Community Centre, Basildon. We will be hiring the whole building for the day so there should be plenty of room for exhibitors and activities. Amiga dealers and other user groups will be invited to exhibit and we plan to have activities such as games competitions, software and hardware demonstrations and much more, so there will be plenty of fun and frolics. By the next issue of Clubbed (planned for early August) we will have full details, in the meantime announcements will be posted on the SEAL website.
Vaporware News

Vapor have been busy enhancing their suite of internet software yet again, improvements include:

**Voyager 3.2**
Voyager is going from strength to strength with support for FONT FACE, HTTP file uploads (useful for web-based mail services etc.) and FBII support to speed up image display on AGA machines all added since the Christmas release of Voyager 3. The program has also had many improvements and bug fixes to existing features in that time, including better SSL support, fixed TurboPrint printing and improved PNG support. However the jewels in Voyager’s crown are its plug-ins, so far two have been released, a Shockwave Flash player and a PDF viewer.

The Flash plug-in is particularly impressive as it allows Amiga users to experience Flash enhanced websites for the first time. Flash is an interactive animation format developed by Macromedia, it allows web designers to create much more complex interactive websites. Because it uses a largely vector format a very complex presentation can be stored in a reasonably small file. Although Voyager’s plug-in doesn’t support the very latest version it does work extremely well and takes advantage of PPC (PowerUP) if it is present.

**Metal Web 4**
After a number of public betas the final version of Vapor’s web visual design package has been released. Metal Web offers full visual page creation including tables and frames. It also includes the ability to view and edit the created HTML source within the program and to test pages in an external browser.

**AmiIRC 3.4**
Widely considered the best Amiga IRC client and by some the best on any platform AmiIRC is still being regularly updated. Version 3.4 offers a new tabbed editor and a PDF viewer. The Flash plug-in is particularly impressive as it allows Amiga users to experience Flash enhanced websites for the first time. Flash is an interactive animation format developed by Macromedia, it allows web designers to create much more complex interactive websites. Because it uses a largely vector format a very complex presentation can be stored in a reasonably small file. Although Voyager’s plug-in doesn’t support the very latest version it does work extremely well and takes advantage of PPC (PowerUP) if it is present.

**KickStart Show 2000**
Kickstart, the Surrey based Amiga user group are holding their latest Amiga show on Saturday the 27th of May at Brook Hall, Brrox Road, Ottershaw, Surrey. This will be their third show and if the previous ones are anything to go by it should be a great day.

Foremost Home Computing, Epic and Ramjam Consultants will be at the show selling their Amiga goods. Several Amiga user groups including Asa from Southampton and of course SEAL will be there hoping to meet new members. A wide variety of new and used Amiga hardware and software will also be on show.

The ever popular games competitions will be run again, this year contestants will be able to battle each other head to head in Quake and race with Super Skidsmack. As it that wasn’t enough prizes including 3.1Gb hard drives and Clickboom’s new game Nightlight will be up for grabs.

A number of demonstrations will be going on during the show including: Amiga OS 3.5, Lightwave, Amiga on the Internet, PowerPC games and software, and Amiga for Beginners.

Amiga Inc., who along with Analogic are sponsoring the show, have donated two A1200 Magic packs as prizes. One of the A1200s will be given away as a door prize, so you just have to come along to the show to have a chance of winning!

Doors open at 12:00 and entry costs £1, more information can be found on the Kickstart website at http://www.kickstart-amiga.co.uk

**Amiga Users Unite!**
SEAL member Richard Lambert has just launched a brand new Amiga website with a variety of information to support on-line Amiga users. He has included extensive sections on the latest news. Amiga user groups, recent Aminet uploads (including a mirror of the last month’s in case the main Aminet site is down), IRC channels and a gallery. There is also an extensive links page.

The site is called United Amiga Users and looks like it will develop into a very useful resource, so why not pay Richard a visit?
http://www.unitedamigausers.com/

**AmigaOS running on PPC in 2000?**
A group of well known Amiga programmers including Ralph Schmidt (who wrote the software for Phase 5’s PowerUP boards) and Frank-Markial (the chief author of CyberGraphX) have announced they are working on a new operating system which is designed to allow the existing AmigaOS to be gradually ported to PPC while retaining much backwards compatibility. The new OS is called MorphOS.
Currently MorphOS runs on the existing Phase 5 PowerUP 68k/PPC ac-celerators but the 68k CPU is not used at all. AmigaOS is run on a 68k emula-tion developed by Ralph Schmidt and various modules (programs, libraries, device drivers) can then be ported to PPC, as more modules are ported per-formance should increase and we move towards a 100% PPC Amiga OS. In a recent press release the MorphOS team state that most system friendly 68k programs should run as well as existing PowerUP/PPC software and of course any new PPC programs.
Already some major projects of the AmigaOS have been ported to PPC, here are a few that were mentioned:

* Exec, the core of the Amiga’s multi-tasking OS,
* Native SCSI drivers for the CyberStorm and Blizzard PPC SCSI controllers,
* The utility and math libraries,
* CyberGraphX 5 - a new PPC native version especially for MorphOS,
* Ramdisk Handler - giving a new highspeed (40Mbs) RAM Disk
  * CD-ROM File System,
  * Picture, GIF, ILM, PBM, and PCX datatypes,
  * Plus the many PowerUP that ap-plications already run, usually with an increase in speed.

MorphOS has already gained some support with some developers who plan to port applications including:

* PPC native Magic User Interface (this should speed up all UI programs running on MorphOS),
* Vapware are interested in porting their portfolio of Internet applications including Genesis which will give MorphOS a TCP/IP stack,
* Titan will support MorphOS with BuMiT, Elastic Dreams, Fantastic Dreams and Candy Factory.

MorphOS is designed to be portable and the authors have already commented favourably on the possibility of porting it to Amijoe and other PPC platforms. A port to other processors is also not out of the question.

According to the press release an alpha version has been released to selected developers and a public beta should be available in the coming months. MorphOS will be a commercial product when it is finally released.

MorphOS has a website where you can read the complete press release at http://www.morphos.de/
Elbow, the Polish firm who produce the Power Tower and a wide range of other Amiga accessories, have demonstrated a version of their FastAsta (IDE) controller for the ZIV slots on Apollo's new ZIV A1200 bus board. This is the first expansion for these special faster slots. The FastAsta controller (which is already available for a1200s without a bus board and in a Zorro III version) allows Amiga users to take better advantage of the many fast, cheap large capacity IDE drives which are now available and are severely restricted by the A1200 and 4000's built-in IDE controller. Power Computing sells the Elbow FastAsta products in the UK as the PowerFlyer range, they can be found at: http://www.powerc.com/ or phone (01234) 851500.

IBMrowse 2.2 Out Now

A new version of IBMrowse correcting many of the problems described in our review last issue has been released. IBMrowse 2.2 is much more stable than 2.1 and has improved (although still far from perfect) Javascript support. The improved cache browser, browser tabs, and sheer speed of version 2 can now be enjoyed without the browser crashing, it really is a joy to use. Unfortunately some features are still unimplemented including graphical printing (although PostScript printing still works well) and SSL support except via Miami SSL (a new version of AmiSSL is required). Some features which have been implemented are configurable pop-up menus and buttons, drag-n-drop GUI (you can now move the window and fast link buttons etc around the window), FONT FACE support and FTP and HTTP resume so you can complete failed downloads. Version 2.2 is a free upgrade for IBMrowse 2.x owners.

Altogether if we were reviewing IBMrowse 2.2 now it would get a "Tasty", but it's still a way away from the elusive “Caviar” rating! HiSoft are at http://www.hisoft.co.uk, phone (0500) 223660. IBMrowse 2.2 costs £34.95, upgrades from V.1.2 are £12.95.

Elbox Demo ZIV Card

Elbox, the Polish firm who produce the Power Tower and a wide range of other Amiga accessories, have demonstrated a version of their FastAsta (IDE) controller for the ZIV slots on Apollo's new ZIV A1200 bus board. This is the first expansion for these special faster slots. The FastAsta controller (which is already available for a1200s without a bus board and in a Zorro III version) allows Amiga users to take better advantage of the many fast, cheap large capacity IDE drives which are now available and are severely restricted by the A1200 and 4000's built-in IDE controller. Power Computing sells the Elbow FastAsta products in the UK as the PowerFlyer range, they can be found at: http://www.powerc.com/ or phone (01234) 851500.

Phase 5 Insolvency

Amiga hardware mainstay Phase 5 went into receivership in January. No direct reason was given for the move but we can only assume that the delays in producing the G4 based PPC accelerators was one of the problems that caused them to run out of money. Fortunately Phase 5 had signed contracts with DCE to license all their existing products, including the current PowerUP! PPC cards and B/CVision PPC graphics cards, DCE have committed to continuing their production (see right). On a less happy note there has been no news of the fate of those Phase 5 users who either had a card in for repair or had paid for a pre-order on a G4 card. They were told to take up their case with the official receiver but so far we haven't heard of anyone being successful (although it may just take a long time of course).

Just as we go to press www.amiga-news.de has reported that the “Case of Filing for Insolvency abandoned due to lack of assets” this means that potential claims have to go to the former owners: Wolf Dietrich and Gerald Karda, Phase5 digital products, in Das Heute 27, D-61140 Oberursel, Germany.

DCE Pick Up Pieces

As we reported in Clubbed issue 3 DCE have already taken over the major part of Phase 5's product lines at the time of their bankruptcy, fortunately as the contracts were already signed they have not been affected and DCE are continuing to produce most of Phase 5's 68k portfolio and are beginning production of the PPC products. This means we should see CyberStorm and Blizzard 16K accelerators and the B/CVision and B/CVision PPC graphics cards available again soon.

DCE are also producing a new version of the CyberVision 64/30 Zorro III graphics card which will take advantage the double speed Zorro II (not the new ZIV) slots on Apollo's ZIV bus board. Another piece of good news is that DCE are providing a repair service for all the Phase 5 products they now manufacture so existing Phase 5 owners aren't left completely out in the cold. DCE have a website at: http://www.deccom.de/ Their UK distributor is Power Computing: http://www.powerc.com/ (01234) 851500.

Innovative Release New Products

A demo version of VHISTudio is available from the Innovative website. VHISTudio is priced at £600 (about $	ext{25UKP}$) with the digital camera drivers costing an additional £200 (about $	ext{10UKP}$ each).

Innovative's other new release has been fXscan, this package interfaces to a variety of scanners using ScanQuix. It provides a straightforward user interface with image processing options geared towards correcting the colour balance of scans. fXscan also supports Wolf Faust's ICS automatic colour correction system. I understand that fXscan is included with the new version 5 of ScanQuix as an alternative to the more technical standard scanning application.

Finally a demo version of fXPaint is now available on the Innovative website for anyone interested in the features of the program or how well it will perform on their machine. Innovative's website is at http://www.innovative-web.de/ and has secure on-line ordering.

fXPaint is available from Bittersoft (http://www.bittersoft.com/, (01908) 225454) and a few other dealers in the UK so I wouldn't be surprised if they can get the other products for you too. ScanQuix is available from Eyetech.

R.I.P. AmigaOS 3.5

It is unfortunate that Amiga Format was clubbed and that no one is interested in the features of the program or how well it will perform on their machine. Innovative's website is at http://www.innovative-web.de/ and has secure on-line ordering.

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Photogenics 4.4

Paul Nolan has released a new beta version of Photogenics, his image processor reviewed in issue 4. Version 4.4, which we found to be extremely stable, belying its beta status, also adds new features and resolves some of the niggles we had with 4.2 in our review. A progress bar in each image window allows you to see the progress of the current effect eliminating that “has it hung?” feeling on slow systems. The Repulse does not include a hardware MP3 decoder however it does have a feature connector which would allow one to be added if there is sufficient demand.

This Surf is Dead

Individual Computers, the prolific manufacturer of PC-compatible products like the Budha, Catweasel and SilverSurfer have released a new Ethernet card for Amigas with Zorro II slots. The X-Surf (pronounced Cross Surf really) has 10BaseT (UTP) and 10Base2 (BNC) Ethernet connections allowing it to be connected to most Ethernet networks and network devices like cable modems at a theoretical maximum speed of 10Mbit (about 1Mb) per second. In addition to its Ethernet functionality the X-Surf also has a pair of Pio-mode 2 IDE ports, two A1200 style clock ports and an expansion connector. The IDE ports cannot currently be used until a new version of IDE-Fix (reportedly called IDEFix 2000 or IDEMax) is released. The clock ports can already be used with Individual’s clock port devices and their GoldSurfer (2 x Serial and 1 x Parallel) card can be connected to the expansion port.

Paraglide on Final Approach

The long awaited 3D acceleration add-on for Village Tronic’s Picasso IV graphics card will be available very soon according to Blittersoft, the UK distributor. The Paraglide module is based on a 3DFX Voodoo I chip and has 8Mb of dedicated RAM on board. Two software drivers are promised, one using 3DFX’s own Glide API and the other supporting Haagge and Partner’s Warp3D which already works with Phase 5’s 3D accelerated graphics cards. The Warp3D driver should mean that Picasso IV owners with PPC accelerators can now sample the 3D accelerated games just coming to market.

Hyperion Prepare to Amaze

Hyperion have signed agreements to port several more popular PC games to the Amiga in addition to Shogo and Heretic II which they are currently working on. The new games are:

- Sin

This 3D action game, set in 2037, places you in the role of an elite private police force who’s task is to foil a deadly drug trafficker. Sin is set to offer a stronger story line than many 3D shoot-em-ups with puzzles to solve and levels and characters which change depending on the decisions you make earlier in the game. Like Heretic II Sin uses the Quake II engine so this port has been greatly boosted by Heretic II’s completion.

- Worms: Armageddon

The sequel to Team17’s hugely popular Amiga classic.

Descent: Freespace - The Great War

A space based combat simulation where you take part in a variety of missions including seek-and-destroy, espionage and epic battles. You fight on behalf of the Terrans and Vasudans to help defeat the more technically advanced enemy, the Shivans. This technical mismatch adds depth to the game play as you have to steal some of the Shivans’ technology to effectively fight them.

Hyperion have been posting regular updates on their progress on the ports. Sin, Shogo and Heretic II all seem to be progressing well and the other games are now entering development. Heretic II is very near release, you will probably have seen the reviews in Amiga Format and Amiga Active. A demo of Heretic II has just been released and is available from the Hyperion website (http://www.hyperion-software.com) however at 36MB it might be too big for most people to download. SEAL members can get a copy on CD-R from

Hungry for News? Try these great sites!

- Amiga.org - http://www.amiga.org
You’ve stated that the new Amiga will launch with more readily available software than any other computer launch in history. Could you offer more information?

We are targeting 250 applications ready at launch. As the list is released on the site there you will see that we have made great progress towards that goal.

What features are you hoping to migrate across to the new Amiga OS? Multiple screens? Intelligent datatypes? Enhanced AREXX?

There is a list and specification forthcoming. Since I am not in engineering anything I stated here would more likely be in error. You will be pleased with what we have come up with.

With your development program, how much (and when) will the development boxes be, and what skills will people need to be able to offer something to the Amiga effort?

We will have the specifics up by the end of the month. Most are gaming related. There are also many more announcements with other partners.

How much other interest have you garnered throughout the mainstream industry? What have been the most common hurdles to overcome when talking to these companies, and what have been their final reaction and comment?

In the U.S. there is a great desire to see the Amiga come back and hold its place, however because of other influences they would like to see some more action.

In Europe and Asia there are many companies who are coming forward, and there will be many announcements and products delivered through alliances with those firms.

What Amiga applications have been offered to be ported that you are interested in?

Implementing the plans that we have developed. The plans we started in North Dakota with Fleecy, Allan, Jeff and myself. Now we are taking that vision and those ideas and implementing them. There are slight differences but overall we are executing our plans. You have some of the same partners too (Sun, Corel). Could you tell us more about their interest and importance?

Why haven’t Red Hat Linux, Sun and Corel yet proclaimed their Amiga support on their websites or through press releases?

Corel did announce on their site. Sun will, the announcement did come from them, and Red Hat is forthcoming. There are also many more announcements with other partners.

By joining together we can make something happen, but by tearing each other apart we will fail. I have never seen a group of people who want to see something more (or less) available at launch is a significant boost to Amiga’s chances.

Words of wisdom:

Amiga have released the first edition of their new magazine, Amiga World. The magazine is currently available on the Amiga website in HTML and PDF format. PDF can be downloaded and printed (using a free tool like APDF on the Amiga or Acrobat for Mac and PC).

Gary Storm and Robert Williams

What a difference a few months make!

Since last we spoke, the new Amiga owners (Bill McEwen and Fleecy Moss) have forged ahead with developing a new kick-ass operating system (based on Tao’s “Elate”) for desktop computers, digital set-top-boxes, mobile phones... practically anything really. Want an Amiga Microwave? No problem.

Putting their hardware where their mouths are, Amiga even unveiled the specs of the developer system at the Amiga 2k show in St Louis on the first of April. Wool-Hoo! Basically this is a 500mHz AMD CPU, a hot stuff NVIDIA graphic card, sound card and various pc bits - all for about £500 (and yes, anyon... We will have the specifics up by the end of the month.

The first issues includes several articles on Amiga’s vision for the future, “Tearing Down the Walls” and “Beyond the Beige Box” discuss the new future Amiga in partnership with Tao seas for computing. There is a report from the recent St Louis show where the new Developer platform was launched which ties in with an article describing Amiga’s new developer program. “Entering the Amiverse” (a term we seem sure to hear a lot more of) and “Inside the New Amiga” give an overview of the concepts and components that will form the basis of the new Amiga system.

In a nice touch to support the existing Amiga press a section called the “Amiga Resource Center” is included which includes details of the Amiga dedicated magazines available world wide. (Before you ask Clubbed isn’t mentioned in this issue but we should be in the next one).

Amiga have and are proving themselves to be what they said they were - the saviours of Amiga. The Future has never looked so good.

Gary Storm

Bill McEwen Interview

Gary Storm Talks to Amiga’s President and CEO

Amiga World

By Gary Storm and Robert Williams

Family:

Wife Trish, son William, daughters Ashley and C.K.

Position:

President/CEO, or as I am referred to here Overlord Supreme.

Favourite Movie:

Amazon Women in the Avocado Jungle of Death.

Words of wisdom:

Treat others the way that you want to be treated.

Probably the first Amiga question people may want answered is simply why? Why bother with buying what ever Amiga has left to offer in a world that generally think it is a byword for ‘games machine’ or corporate failure?

Amiga never had a fair shake. It was always a second “computer” company and while brilliant in all respects it never received the credit.

Are you able to say what happened at Gateway with Amiga? Jim Collas and the crew seemed to have practically everything in place for a major impact on the industry, then: POOF!

Nope. I really do not know what happened. We were moving ahead and then it all stopped. I don’t know what happened, and I am sure that I will never know.

Gateway had their chance, and now we are an independent organization focused 100% on Amiga nothing else.

Yourself, Fleecy and Tao seem to have adopted a lot of the Collas strategy, in that you’re focusing on what the software (OS) has to offer for various incarnations of computer technology (desktops, STB’s, mobile-phones etc.), to be made by OEM’s.

I am with with Gateway for almost two months working on the plans, and we are implementing the plans that we had developed. The plans we started in North Dakota with Fleecy, Allan, Jeff and myself. Now we are taking that vision and those ideas and implementing them. There are slight differences but overall we are executing our plans.

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A list will be up on the site by the end of the month. Most are gaming related. There are also many favorites that have committed to come back.
Everyone is familiar with the Compact Disc as a medium for music storage and over the last ten years it has become the de facto standard for computer data distribution too. Until quite recently writing to a CD was deemed impossible or at least impossibly expensive. With the development of special recordable and rewriteable discs all that has changed, and over the last couple of years CD recorders and discs have become very readily available at affordable prices.

**Data**

Originally CDs were designed only for music, hence they are split into tracks with each track being a constant stream of digital data. When the specification for data CDs was decided the concept of tracks was kept, this meant that data and CD audio tracks could be mixed on the same CD. When a data CD is prepared, all the files and the directory structure information is encoded into a single file that is written to the CD as a data track. Fortunately an additional standard for the format of this data was agreed called ISO9660, this means a CD data conforming to ISO 9660 can be read on almost any computer platform.

The original ISO9660 specification was fairly limited, for example it only allowed MSDOS style character file names. Over the years several extensions to the format were created to cater for operating systems that support more complex filenames and directory structures. The most common of these are the RockRidge extensions, which are used by most Unix systems and the Amiga, and Joliet, which was designed by Microsoft to support Windows 95's long filenames. Because both of these are extensions to ISO9660, discs created with them can usually be read by systems that do not support the particular extension, however they will only get shortened versions of the file names.

Recordable CDs, unlike most other computer data storage devices, can only be written to once, data added to the CD cannot be changed. This in combination with the fact that data and audio tracks must contain a continuous stream of data mean recordable CDs cannot be written to file by file as you do with hard drives, ZIP discs and other devices.

**Audio**

Digital audio data is stored on the CD in a format called CDDA which, unsurprisingly, stands for Compact Disc Digital Audio. Each audio track consists of two uncompressed samples per channel at 44.1kHz and 16 bit resolution. Most CD-R software takes care of the conversion between sound file formats, and will even interleave 8-bit samples up to 16 bit and lower sampling frequencies up to 11025Hz if required.

The tracks available on a CD, be they audio or data are listed in a Table of Contents (TOC), this acts as a look-up table so the reader can jump straight to the requested track. Because a recordable CD cannot be rewritten it is called CDDA data, if it is written, the TOC can only be written after all the tracks are finished (this is usually called finalising or closing the disc depending on your software).

**Packet Writing**

Compiling a small audio disc using MakeCD.

If you want to copy tracks from a CD onto a CD-R you need to get the digital audio into your computer. If you have a sampler this could be done by sampling the audio output of a CD player into the computer, however this will result in a loss of quality because the digital data has to be converted to analog then re-sampled. The other method is to use your CD-ROM drive to read the CDDA data straight off the CD over the SCSI or IDE bus. Unfortunately not all CD-ROM drives can do this all, others are not great at it and very few can read CDDA at their full rated speed. Many older drives, particularly IDE drives will not read CDDA over their bus at all, if you try, your software will just give you an error. Other drives will read the audio but it will have audible clicks and pops where it was not extracted perfectly. If your software (usually the CD mastering software includes the option to extract audio) can do it try extracting at a lower speed this may clear up the problem. If your CD-ROM drive cannot extract audio well at all most CD writers will do the job fine, however you will have to save all the tracks onto your hard disk first then write the disc.

**Making your own CDs has never been easier or cheaper...**

Robert Williams investigates.

**Sessions**

The tracks available on a CD, be they audio or data are listed in a Table of Contents (TOC), this acts as a look-up table so the reader can jump straight to the requested track. Because a recordable CD cannot be rewritten it is called CDDA data, if it is written, the TOC can only be written after all the tracks are finished (this is usually called finalising or closing the disc depending on your software).

Until the TOC is written the CD cannot be read by any reader other than the CD writer. For data CDs this is a problem, as often you will want to add more data at a later date but would like to read the CD in the mean time. To get around this problem you can use sessions, a session is a set of tracks with a table of contents, however when a session is finished (usually called closing or fixing a session) a further session can be opened ready to receive more tracks. When all the tracks in the next session have been written then the session is closed with a new TOC. When the CD is read the TOC of the last session is always used, if you tell your software to open a new session, the tracks in the previous session(s) can also be included in the new TOC, therefore the whole contents of what is called a multi-session disc can be read. Once all the tracks on a CD have been written the disc can then be closed, this means the last session is closed and its TOC written without opening a further session, nothing further can then be added to the disc.

Because multiple sessions were an addition to the original CD specification most (if not all) audio players and some older CD-ROM drives do not support them. Readers that do not support multi-session will still be able to access all the tracks in the first session, for audio readers this allows you to create CD-Extra discs, these have audio tracks in the first session and data in the subsequent session(s). Unfortunately the player will only recognise the first session and happily play the audio tracks there, where all almost all newer players will read both sessions so you can access the data and play the audio tracks. This is safer than combining audio and data in the same session (creating a mixed mode disc) as older audio players may but it will have audible clicks and pops make a perfect copy of another disc these breaks are unacceptable. Therefore some CD writers and some software support another writing method called Disc at Once (DoA), as the name suggests DoA allows the whole disc to be written in one go, the laser is not switched off until all the tracks are written. This allows any length of inter-track gap to be set, including zero so the tracks flow seamlessly one into another.

**Track at Once and Disc at Once**

As I have already mentioned each track of a CD-R must be written in its entirety, the CD writer cannot write a bit, turn its laser off, then write some more later. Normally however, the writer stops writing at the end of each track, this means you can stop and add more tracks later and also that any time taken to prepare the data for the next track will not cause problems. According to the CD-R specification there must then be a minimum two second gap before the start of the next track. This method of writing is called Track at Once (ToO), all CD writers and all CD mastering software supports this method. Some times when recording a “live” audio where the track runs into each other with no breaks or making a perfect copy of another disc these breaks are unacceptable. Therefore some CD writers and software masters another writing method called Disc at Once (DoA), as the name suggests DoA allows the whole disc to be written in one go, the laser is not switched off until all the tracks are written. This allows any length of inter-track gap to be set, including zero so the tracks flow seamlessly one into another.

**On the Fly or Image Files?**

Generating the ISO9660 data for a track and converting certain audio files to CDDA can be a slow and CPU intensive process. Because a CD track (or the whole CD in DoA mode) has to be written in one operation, your system must be able to prepare the data and send it to the CD writer at the rate it is being written to the CD. Depending on the specification of your system and the data being written, you may or may not be able to write the data directly to CD-R or on-the-fly as it is often called. All CD mastering packages offer the option to test a write operation before you perform it for real and potentially waste a CD-R.

Test writing does exactly the same as writing for real except the CD writer performs the operation after a short delay and is not touched. If your system cannot keep up the flow of data required you will get a “Buffer Under Run” message. This means that the write operation had to be aborted because the writer ran out of data to write, if you were writing to the disc for real it would be blank, commonly called a “coaster”!

If you do get a buffer under-run (hope- fully on a test write) you have a couple of options open to you. The first is to write the data at a lower speed, however you may find that you just cannot write slowly enough for the system to keep up. Also multiple test runs to determine the minimum speed take a lot of time.

The other option is to use an image file for each track, in this case the CD master- ing software creates a file of all the data for each track in the correct format for the CD (data in ISO9660, audio con- verted to CDDA). Then when the disc is written the data just has to be trans- ferred from hard disk to the CD writer, no processor intensive conversion has to be performed. The downsides to this method are the overall process will take longer as the image files have to be compiled first and that you need enough hard drive space for the track you want in one hit, a complete 74 minute CD needs about 740Mb.

**CD-R or CD-RW?**

Types of recordable CDs are avail- able, CD-Recordable (CD-R) and CD- Rewritable (CD-RW), both can be written to many times, but are some important differences. Data is written to a CD-R disc it cannot be deleted or overwritten. You can however add data in multiple ses- sions to a CD-R so you don’t have to fill it in one go. CD-R works in almost all existing CD players and CD-ROM drives. CD- RW discs can have data erased from them, with Amiga CD writing software you can erase any data from the disc, the last session of the last track. CD-RW discs are far less compatible than CD- Rs, they work in newer CD-ROM drives but are usually designated “multi-read” and a very few audio CD-Rs. CD-RWs are usually at least three times the cost of CD-Rs.

**Packet Writing**

If you read up on CD writing you will soon come across the term “packet writing”, this is a method which allows you to treat a CD-R or more usually a CD-RW much like an ordinary read-only disk. For example you can copy files by drag-and-drop on the desktop. Unfortunately there is currently no standard for this except for the Amiga. However packet written CDs do have some drawbacks, they cannot be read unless specific driver software is install and in general the opinion of the PC packetwriting software (such as Direct CD) seems to be that it is slow and prone to disk complica- tion. So the lack of Amiga support may not be as bigger loss as it sounds.

**Software**

A CD writer can be used as a standard read-only CD-ROM drive simply by mounting it as a standard MS-DOS file system (as explained in issue 4) how- ever if you want to use it to write CDs a dedicated CD writing package is required. Three major CD writing pack-
Hardware
There are three aspects to choosing hard ware for CD writing, the most obvious is that the hardware you buy is important to make sure your Amiga is up to the task of supplying the writer with the constant flow of data it requires. Finally you will need some CD-R or CD-RW media to actually write on.

CD Writer
A bewildering variety of CD writers are now available, they come with different interfaces, speeds and amounts of buffer memory here I’ve tried to explain what you need to look out for when choosing one.

Speed
Like CD-ROM drives the speed of a CD writer is stated as the multiple of the original CD audio transfer rate of 1.74Kb/second. Each drive is provided with different speeds. Most drives currently on the market write CD-R at 4X (600Kb/s) or 8X drives are now common and even the new 12X drives are being introduced at reasonable prices. Almost all drives add some support to CD-RWs but these are limited to a maximum of 4X. I have read rumours that 8X CD-R drives are on the horizon. What speed drives you go for really depends on three things, how much you are prepared to pay, how long you can wait for discs to write and your Amiga system.

Price
2X or even 4X IDE CD writers can be found for under £100 and provide an excellent low cost solution. SCSI writers start at around £150 but you could pay nearly £300 for one of the new 12X units that are just becoming available.

Time
At 1X a complete 650Mb data or 74 minute audio CD will take the full 74 minutes to write plus some additional time to close the disc. At 4X this is reduced to 18 minutes for 8X and just 6 minutes on a 12X drive. However if you’re only going to write a CD occasionally waiting 20 minutes for a disc may be quite acceptable, and certainly not worth paying double for the CD writer.

Buffer
To help keep the steady flow of data as the CD writer is writing your CD-R drives are equipped with buffer memory (in addition to the buffer in the computer’s memory maintained by the CD writing software). Before writing starts the buffer is filled with data, then if the data from the computer stutters a few seconds of data is held in the buffer to make up the shortfall preventing a coaster. In general the more buffer memory the drive has the better, although on a well configured system it shouldn’t matter too much. As a guide most older (2X) drives have a 512KB or 1MB buffer, 2MB is common on 4X drives and faster drives can have 4MB.

Drivers
In common with other generic hardware items you need to make sure that the CD writer you choose to buy is supported by your chosen Amiga software. When consumer CD writers first appeared some computer manufacturers had their own custom set meaning the CD soft-ware had to specifically support each drive. Fortunately most manufacturers now use a standard command set which is even common between IDE and SCSI drives. This means that almost any CD writer you can buy today that uses a standard SCSI or IDE (ATAPI) interface will work with all three Amiga CD-R packages. SEAL members have drives from Mitsumi, Plexor and Yamaha allowing working 100% reliably for instance. If you’re concerned about compatibility and are on the net all three software packages have extensive compatibility lists. Some older drives like the MakeISO also have mailing lists where you can discuss different drives with other users.

System
As long as your controller (SCSI or IDE) can sustain a transfer rate of twice the writing rate (so you can read from the source and write at the same time) you should be able to write CDRs using an imagefile of the disc.

Drivers
The type of controller you have can affect the reliability of your CD writing, whether you can write data and tracks from some audio files on-the-fly and whether the computer can be used for anything else while writing. Controllers can be split into two major types, PIO (Programmed I/O) and DMA (Direct Memory Access). PIO controller use the Amiga’s CPU to transfer the data from the controller into RAM. DMA controllers transfer the data directly into RAM with little CPU intervention. This means that while data is being transferred a PIO controller will use up a lot of CPU time and can effectively cripple other pro-grams running on the Amiga and leave little processor power for the on-the-fly operations like ISO image creation. Normal data transfers like loading a file only take a few seconds so this isn’t too important. CD writing can take over an hour, during which the Amiga won’t be responding to inputs in the usual way. Running another CPU intensive task could interrupt the data transfer, this happened for long enough on the writing side the CDR will be ruined.

DMA controllers leave much more CPU time free as data is being transferred so the Amiga can continue during the CD writing process and on-the-fly operations are more likely to be suc-cesful. There is much less chance that a CPU intensive application will cause the burn to fail.

CD Reader
As I mentioned in the audio section if you intend to create audio discs with tracks from other CDs you need a CD-ROM drive that can digitally extract CD audio. You can test your current drive with the demo version of MakeCD, which has the ability to extract audio. If you extract an audio track to disc you can see how fast your drive is and listen to the quality of the extracted track, which should be indistinguishable from the original. If you intend to burn audio on-the-fly your CD-ROM needs to ex-tract audio faster than your CD writer will write it.

System
As long as your controller (SCSI or IDE) can sustain a transfer rate of twice the writing rate (so you can read from the source and write at the same time) you should be able to write CDRs using an imagefile of the disc.

CD-R Utilities
Here are a couple of utilities which you may find useful in addition to your CD writing program. They can be found on Aminet either on the net (URLs with reviews starting on page 16) or on their CD. The utilities we reviewed in the issue 4 of Clubbed useful.

IdentCDR.lha (disk/odrom)
Simply give this tiny utility the device name and number of your CD writer and it will display a variety of information about the CD-R disc in side. This includes the actual manu-facturer (as opposed to who prints their name on the label), the total recording time available and the type of dye used.

MakeBackup.lha (util/bakup)
CD-Rs make a very useful backup medium until you have more than 640Mb to store. This handy utility scans the drive or directory of your choice and makes a list of each 640Mb of files. These lists can then be loaded into MakeCD and the files burnt to CD-R using your CD-R drive.

CD-R Software Homepages (URLs with reviews starting on page 16)
Mostly discusses Windows (and occasionally Mac) CD writing software but also covers many platform independent issues.

Comprehensive FAQ, answers common CD writing questions and in the process explains the technology.

CD-R F AQ
- Issue 5

CLUBBED - Issue 5
Spring 2000
Something Fishy

Reviews are very subjective, what one reviewer may love, another hates. Such is life. So we decided to have a general score, which the reader can take into account along with the text.

So we invented the fish... it’s easy to work out which we feel is a better product... the more bones that show, the smellier the fish.1 We only award our top Caviar rating to products that are practically perfect.

Caviar

The best so far! We can hardly pick anything out of it, not even boogers. Rarer than Nessie.

BurnIT 2.65

This product is definitely worth buying but, like most things, still has room for improvement.

Average, neither too good nor too bad — it works but there are areas which need major improvement or are way behind competing products.

Crap, but hopefully getting better in future versions (if there are any).

SMELLY

Disgusting, multicolour yeast inducing abomination that insults the Amiga.

CD-R Software Round-Up

CD writing is not an area where the Amiga lacks software, Robert Williams & Robert Davis review the challengers.

BurnIT’s nine windows all accessed from the main panel can be a bit confusing.

Program Design

As I mentioned before, BurnIT’s main windows are accessible from the nine buttons of the initial window. Each of these windows almost feels like a separate program because there is little commonality between them, for example the DaO and TaO windows look and work completely differently even though they have a similar function. This feeling of separation is reinforced by the fact that in several areas of the program you have to save a data file only to load it into another section. I feel this design makes BurnIT more difficult to learn and use because the steps required to carry out an operation are not logical from the GUI design.

Documentation

As the Titanic website burnIT DaO is supplied with both printed and Amiga Guide documentation. We didn’t look at our review copy but the Amiga Guide is pretty comprehensive describing most of the program windows along with a set of tutorials to help you complete common CD-R operations like data and audio CD creation and copying. In the AmigaGuide manual we found several sections listed on the contents page were missing including the descriptions of some of the sub windows and an FAQ, while none of these were vital the documentation was not complete. The documentation contains no background information on CD writing which is quite important for beginners although this is available on various Internet sites (see the CD-R feature on page 12).

Conclusion

BurnIT has lots of facilities including a powerful data CD builder and the best audio facilities of the three. The interface is far from perfect but it does do the job once you get used to it. Despite my reservations about the GUI BurnIT does provide a balanced set of impressive features and all these programs will take some learning due to the complexity of CD creation. The on-line manual, while being out classed by the other two here, provides some good tutorials to get you going on common operations (building data and audio CDs and copying).

MakeCD 3.2c

Developer: Patrick Ohly & Angela Schmidt

WWW: www.titancomputer.de

Distributor: HiSoft

WWW: www.hisoft.co.uk

Price: TaO Version £34.95 DaO Version £49.95

The process of creating a CD in MakeCD revolves around the Tracks list in the main window. Whatever the type of CD you build up all the tracks you want in the list, choosing all audio tracks creates an audio CD, all data a data CD and you can choose a mixture to make a Mixed-Mode CD. If you have audio or track image files ready to burn you can just drag them from a Workbench window into the MakeCD track list to add them to the CD then use the Up and Down buttons to arrange the tracks. You can individually set whether each track will be written direct to CD or if it will use a hard disk image file (which is less processor and data intensive). To write in TaO or DaO mode you just use the slider in the Advanced Options window.

Data

Data CDs can be created from any volume available to your Amiga. In the ISO Image Pref window you can choose the volumes or directories you want to include in the CD, all the files and directories inside these will be included on the CD. MakeCD supports ISO9660 discs and CD-R formatting, which means you can burn disc compatible with almost all platforms including PC (DOS, Windows, Linux etc...), Amiga and Mac, however it doesn’t support the Windows specific Joliette or Mac HFS formats. You can even make bootable CDTV, CDD2 (requires a CDD2 or CDD32.tm file which is on the Amiga Developer’s CD) and MS-DOS (bootable PC) discs if you so desire. If you want to create a data CD with a different directory structure to the source hard drive you will need to build your CD on the hard drive first because MakeCD does not include a directory structure editor.

Audio

MakeCD is very flexible when it comes to burning audio CDs, you can burn tracks directly from other CDs or a wide variety of Audio files. Supported formats
You could copy a CD using MakeCD's normal interface just by adding all the tracks from the source CD to the list, however this would be quite a time consuming task. To aid you in this process MakeCD has a copy CD option which opens a separate window with just the options you need. This window allows you to change options such as whether to use an image file and if the disc should be burnt TaO or DaO. Once you're happy with the settings clicking the copy CD button which will add all the tracks to the Write Tracks window to burn the CD. There is also a Save Project button which will record your current track list with the settings you chose, so you can make alterations or save the project if you want.

CDRWs
Rewritable CDs are treated just like normal CD-R by MakeCD only the different behaviour that you can erase them in various ways after they have been recorded. You can erase the session fixation (so you can add further tracks to a session), the last track, session or the complete CD. For a complete CD two erase methods are offered, fast which takes a few minutes (the exact time depends on your CD writer) and thorough which takes as long as writing all the data on the CD-RW.

MakeCD is very well documented with a printed manual, on-line Amiga Guide and extensive bubble help. The short printed manual supplied by HiSoft consists of an introduction to the basics of CD writing followed by a series of illus-trated tutorials and a glossary which serves to get you started. The manual is obviously aimed at HiSoft's squirrels, not the average user and is strongly recommended against for others. The Amiga Guide manual is very comprehensive with more tutorials and a reference section covering all the windows and options. There is also an FAQ section and list of the various CDROMs and writers supported and a custom installation process menu.

Burning
When you come to burn your CD, the MakeCD opens its Write window, here you choose whether to do a test burn with the files selected, or whether to create a new blank track list. Clicking on Start then causes the MakeCD to start writing or test writing to the CD. At the bottom of the Write window a large text box displays informa-tion about the track being written. The top half of the window is taken up by several progress meters which show you the progress of the current track, and the CD as a whole among other things, you really couldn't ask for more information. One slight annoyance is that you cannot change the write speed from the Write window, if you find your write speed is too fast or indeed too slow when you test you have to abort out of the write window to change the option in the settings requester.

Results
MakeCD's Write and ISO Image windows give plenty of status info.

MasterISO 2.5
Developer: Asimware Innovations
WWW: www.asimware.com
Distribution: BitlisterSoft
WWW: www.bitlister.com
Tel: (01908) 610170
Price: £49.95
W/ AsimCDFS £69.95

I am aware of three packages for the Amiga that make ISO-9660 discs. Of these I bought MasterISO in the autumn of 1999, and the program works well for my needs.

As I write this review in early March 2000, the current version of MasterISO is 2.5. I suggest you do not upgrade to that version. MasterISO comes on its own CD at version 2.3, and once you have the registration code printed on the card packaged with the CD, you can down-load the upgrade to version 2.4. That one works.

When trying to create an audio CD, version 2.5 gave an error message every time I tried to add data to the disk, either for real, or for trying to simulate a disk write. Version 2.5 did work however to create blank ISO-9660 CDs. The president of the Kansas City Amiga User’s Group, Bob Kennedy, tells me he also went back to version 2.4 after difficulties using 2.5.

Another problem with MasterISO is the repeated display of the yellow “Recoverable Alert” messages. On my Amiga, I have been able to get through each of those alerts without a problem, but they appear continually, as I move from window to window in the program or when I choose to quit MasterISO. At this point, I should explain that MasterISO runs on my A3000 desktop, with an A6400 card. The cpu is the 25-mhz 68040, the machine has 50-meg of ram, and a GVP-M Spectrum video card. My CD writer is a Philips CDC- 2000 which writes standard CD-R, not CD-RW. The 2600 is attached to the A3000's built in SCSI host adapter. The A3000 runs Amiga OS 2.0. I do not have AsimCDFS, from the same producer as MasterISO, so I cannot copy CDs directly from my Toshiba 3X2 reader to the CD-R. That “Disk At Once” or DAO procedure would not work, and I shall eventually purchase AsimCDFS. But I can still do DAO or Track At Once recording and I have been able to copy some music files to a hard drive and then create an audio CD from those files. Audio files for playback on a CD must be captured at a rate of 44100 samples per second. Samples at a lower rate will sound a bit odd when you play them back at a multiple of their sampled speed.

I bought MasterISO for one project. I am continuously updating a CD of pictures and other data files from the Amateur Radio balloon flights in which I participate. Since CD-R writing tends to be quite complex and can be quite off putting to beginners. To avoid any user may experience. The instructions covering all the windows and options. There is also an FAQ section and list of the various CDROMs and writers supported and a custom installation process menu. MakeCD's bubble help feature can be switched on at any time from the program menus and brings up ex-tensive help when you rest your pointer over a gadget for a few seconds, a boon when you're learning the package (al-though you'll soon want to switch it off!).

Finally MakeCD has an excellent website at http://makecd.com.de which boasts an enormous amount of documentation and links to some excel-lent CDR resources, there is also an ac-tive mailing list.

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fxPaint is a new image processing package from a German company, Innovative. On the surface fxPaint seems to have been designed by taking the best parts of existing Amiga graphics packages and moulding them into a new application. Several parts of the program that are strongly reminiscent of other packages: the rub-on-rub-off painting system of Photogenics, the brush handling of ArtEffect and some of the effects are very similar to those in ImageFX. However fxPaint is an all-new program so while the features I’ve mentioned must have surely been inspired by the other packages, they are often implemented differently, some times for the better, other times not so successfully.

Installation
fxPaint is supplied on CD-ROM and, as we’ve come to expect, installs very simply onto your hard drive using the standard installer. A few example images are supplied along with a tutorial video which accounts for about 252Mb of the 276Mb on the CD. The video, which is in AVI format, shows creating a paint on line effect but is pretty hopeless as there is no commentary and resolution is too low to see what options are being chosen. It would have been nice if the CD could have been filled with more example images, brushes and the like.

On loading fxPaint you are immediately struck by the lush, attractive interface. There are colourful icons, a backdrop texture and the text buttons in requesters have a subtle gradient effect. The interface is based on multiple windows and tool bars. Each image is loaded into its own window and there is a useful bar across the bottom of the screen which holds thumbnails of open images. All this visual splendour makes a graphics card almost essential. Although fxPaint does run in 256 colours on AGA Amigas image display quality is patchy. Screen updates are slow and the low resolution screens make using it a chore.

Processing
At the core of fxPaint is a paint-on image processing engine similar to Photogenics 2. You can apply fxPaint’s entire range of image processing effects to the image with the painting tools provided. Applying a blur, emboss or any other effect over just the area you want is as easy as selecting the effect and painting on the image. Rather than directly effecting the image you paint onto an invisible layer over it, the changes are only made permanent once you click Finish in the toolbox. This means you can erase any mistakes by simply painting over them with the right mouse button or clear everything you have done since the last fix with the clear layer button. You can also apply an effect on the whole image using the fill layer button. At any point you can adjust the settings of the effect applied, change the paint colour or even change to a different effect entirely. fxPaint is limited to a single paint layer so you cannot mix effects and keep them all editable. It is possible to save the paint layer so you can apply an effect to the same area later.

fxPaint has over 50 different effects, these are split into groups in the fxManager window. Most effects have an options window that can be accessed using the Options button, also in the fxManager window is a Real Time check box. In Real Time mode the effect over the whole image is calculated as soon as you pick a new effect or change a setting. On complex effects this leads to a long delay every time you change an option even if you know there are several changes you need to make. With Real Time switched off the effect is only calculated when you click Perform in the effect’s Options window. While this method does work, it is not as natural as Photogenics which interrupts the application of the current effect as soon as you change an option. fxPaint has a progress bar at the top of the screen, unfortunately this doesn’t seem to work when applying effects, it sits at the bottom while an effect is being processed only to jump straight up to 100% when the job is done, not very useful. Another annoyance is that fxPaint is not multi-threaded, you cannot do anything with the program while it is processing an effect. To compound this the busy pointer is not displayed while the program is locked during processing so it’s not obvious you can’t do anything until it has finished.

The effects available comprise of all the standard operators you would expect like emboss, blur, emboss, cutout and a range of colour manipulation options. There are also some more interesting effects which include:

Compose
This effect works in a similar way to compose except you can also apply a bumpmap to the composed image and have a lighting control. Also for this effect the alpha channel feature works so you can have bumpmapped, textured (or other shapes) floating above your image complete with shadow or glow. One limitation is that the light source applies to the background too, so to get the bump and shadow effect you want often causes heavy shading on the background that you may not want. Another problem is that the mask isn’t gradual so you get a sharp edge to your object even if the mask isutorials. This effect is very similar to the excellent CandyFactoryPro but at the moment the limitations I have mentioned mean the package that inspired it is much more useful.

fxAlbum Mosaic
This allows you to recreate the “photo mosaic” effect that has been used quite a lot on TV recently, especially in BT’s ad for their “Together” package. In fxPaint you simply use the fxAlbum plug-in to make thumbnails of all the images you want to make up the tiles of your mosaic then while the Album’s still loaded invoke this effect on your chosen picture. You can set the X and Y size of the tiles then fxPaint builds up the mosaic using the Album image closest to the corner of that area of the main image. With the right main image and a good selection of correctly colour images in your album this can produce a really good effect.

Although the range of effects provided by fxPaint is certainly impressive many of them do suffer from a lack of flexibility. Some, such as the distort effect (which has just two types of distort with no strength adjustments) are really crippled, others like the composite effect mentioned above just feel limited. In some ways the simpler effects do make the package easier for the beginner, with less potentially confusing options, however they can be frustrating once you get going. In the Settings window there is a user status setting that when turned on might simplify the effect options for novices while offering expert users the full range. Unfortunately this does not seem to be implemented, in fact we couldn’t spot any differences in the program whatever experience level we set.

One particularly nice aspect of many effects is the position Mode* button, this allows you to set the centre of an effect (such as a radial blur or light source) by clicking the image rather than entering co-ordinates.

A range of painting tools are available from a pop-out list in the tool bar including all the normal options like freehand, line, circle, rectangle (both filled and unfilled) etc. The Brush Manager window allows you to generate new ones. Thumbnails of all the available brushes are shown and you can create circular brushes of varying size and density easily. You can also load existing greyscale images to use as a brush and perform basic operations on brushes like scaling or applying a border. For more complex editing you can export the brush as an image, use any of fxPaint’s tools and effects on it then reload the altered image. The Brush Manager can also create brushes from a line of text in any system font so you can add text to your images. While the brush manager allows complex brushes to be created there are other options that allow you to control the brush size and density while you paint, you have to make a new brush or edit one of the current ones to get the effect you want.

Other Features
fxPaint has the usual selection of image manipulation tools including resize, rotate and skew although strangely there is no crop tool. It also includes functions to create fractal and fire effects. In addition to these several powerful plug-ins are supplied, the main ones are:

Product Information
Developer: Innovative
WWW: www.innovative-web.de
Distributor: Blittersoft
Tel: (01908) 610170
WWW: www.blittersoft.com
Price: £50

fxPaint has an attractive interface with some posh effects. Shown here is the compose effect, simple compositions like the one shown take just a few clicks.

Compose
The compose effect has a large options window where you can choose the image that will be composed over the top of the current one. Position mode allows you to move the second image around and you can apply an automatic shadow or glow. Unfortunately both the shadow and glow effects seems to be limited to a preset colour (black and white respectively) which limits their usefulness. There is also the option to use an alpha channel to mask the secondary album of rectangular images to be composed with greys etc. This could have been very useful with a text alpha channel but we were unable to get it to work.

Bumpmap
This effect works in a similar way to compose except you can also apply a bumpmap to the composed image and have a lighting control. Also for this effect the alpha channel feature works so you can have bumpmapped, textured (or other shapes) floating above your image complete with shadow or glow. One limitation is that the light source applies to the background too, so to get the bump and shadow effect you want often causes heavy shading on the background that you may not want. Another problem is that the mask isn’t gradual so you get a sharp edge to your object even if the mask is an-
Once the download has started, a comprehensive window gives you all the information you need. This was particularly noticeable when comparing the speeds, this was especially true when downloading a large, fast FTP download.

While fxPaint’s speed is acceptable on a 040 and probably most 060 based systems, on slower Amigas where both ImageFX and Photogenics would still be usable it is really too slow for serious use. Another minor niggle is that while fxPaint seems considerably faster under WarpUP, but I could find no easy way to force the program to use WarpUP while the PowerUP libraries are installed.

Conclusion
fxPaint is a reliable, well presented package with a very wide range of features, at a good price. I wouldn’t hesitate to recommend it to anyone who wants a do-it-all package for basic image processing, cataloguing and format conversion and has the system to run it well. Unfortunately a system that runs fxPaint well really needs an ‘060 and a graphics card, and even then it doesn’t feel that fast. If you already have an image processor like Photogenics 4 or ImageFX I don’t think you’ll find much in fxPaint’s image processing armoury that is new. The basic structure of the program is also less flexible than either of the ‘big two’ with their multi-layer systems. fxPaint is so polished it is hard to remember that this is version 1.0, there are three things I would really like to see in future versions; better optimisation (so fxPaint is faster), a more responsive GUI and more options for some of the effects.

Speed
One of fxPaint’s big selling points is that it takes advantage of the latest Amiga add-ons including PPC cards. Both Haage and Partner’s WarpUP and Phase 5’s original PowerUP are supported. While fxPaint definitely uses the PPC (there is virtually no 68K CPU usage when the effects are executing) this doesn’t seem to give as much speed improvement as you would think. In other packages (like Tornado 3D and the VisionFX PPC modules for ImageFX) there seems to be a 5-10X increase in speed for processor intensive operations between my 060/50 and the PPC604e/233. With fxPaint a 2-3X increase seems more usual. In most cases on a 68K only system fxPaint was slower than ImageFX and Photogenics with similar effects, in some cases much slower, this was particularly noticeable when we tested the packages on an ‘030. All in all this means that some of fxPaint’s slower effects are barely faster running on the PPC than the other two on the ‘060!

While fxPaint’s speed is acceptable on a 060 and probably most 060 based systems, on slower Amigas where both ImageFX and Photogenics would still be usable it is really too slow for serious use. Another minor niggle is that while fxPaint seems considerably faster under WarpUP, but I could find no easy way to force the program to use WarpUP while the PowerUP libraries are installed.

Robert Williams tries out this brand new freeware FTP client.

Sometmes when you look at the AmiNet recent list you find nothing of interest, or download an archive with an interesting description only to find a low quality program, which crashes on the first five minutes. Other times you download a seemingly innocuous archive and inside is a real gem. AmiTradeCenter (ATC to its friends) definitely falls into the second category.

ATC is a File Transfer Protocol client, FTP is used to transfer files between computers on a network and is very popular on the Internet. From an Amiga user’s point of view the two most popular uses of FTP are probably downloading or uploading websites to your ISP. ATC has both of these activities well catered for. For AmiNet it offers extensive ADT (Aminet Download Tool, enough of these Three Letter Acronyms already!) support which means you can opt for a list of files that have been uploaded to AmiNet since you last looked, vote on your favourite downloads, search for particular files and much more. On the website front, ATC can upload or download a whole directory structure to your website in one action, currently it doesn’t support uploading only newer files but I’m sure that this will come soon with the current rate of development.

The main ATC window contains a grouped hot list of all the FTP servers you have configured. The options for the current server are set at the top of the main window so you don’t have to open a separate window to change options. There is also a statistics tab so you can check the performance of a site; this can help you choose the fastest server for large sites like Aminet.

Connecting to a server opens a separate ‘Trader’ window, this means you can connect to several servers at once, without running multiple copies of ATC (although you can only have one connection per server entry). Once connected you can choose either a dual column view with a local hard drive directory on the left and the remote FTP site on the right or just the remote site with the local path picked from a popup file requester. As you browse the remote directories you can download files at once or add them to a batch list so you can grab files from several directories in one session.

Once the download has started, a comprehensive window gives you all the information you could possibly want including the progress of the current file and the download as a whole and a graphical history of the connection speed. At any time you can change the order or remove items from the download list. Another unusual feature is a speed limiter to stop other Internet programs being swapped by a large, fast FTP download.

On top of all this functionality ATC has great support via its mailing list where the author announces a new beta implementing user’s requests very regularly. The members of the ATC team all seem to have a great sense of humour and really enjoy what they’re doing which is really fantastic to read in these days of Amiga doom and gloom. Anyone who wants a do-it-all package for basic image processing, cataloguing and format conversion and has the system to run it well would do well to try out fxPaint. However if you’re looking for something a little more fancy then fxPaint is a little lacking in features compared to ImageFX or Photogenics. fxPaint is so polished it is hard to remember that this is version 1.0, there are three things I would really like to see in future versions; better optimisation (so fxPaint is faster), a more responsive GUI and more options for some of the effects.

fxPaint is a reliable, well presented package with a very wide range of features, at a good price. I wouldn’t hesitate to recommend it to anyone who wants a do-it-all package for basic image processing, cataloguing and format conversion and has the system to run it well. Unfortunately a system that runs fxPaint well really needs an ‘060 and a graphics card, and even then it doesn’t feel that fast. If you already have an image processor like Photogenics 4 or ImageFX I don’t think you’ll find much in fxPaint’s image processing armoury that is new. The basic structure of the program is also less flexible than either of the ‘big two’ with their multi-layer systems. fxPaint is so polished it is hard to remember that this is version 1.0, there are three things I would really like to see in future versions; better optimisation (so fxPaint is faster), a more responsive GUI and more options for some of the effects.
Wildfire

Wildfire is a powerful animation and compositing program that allows you to create stunning 3D effects. It is supplied with a large library of effects and allows you to customize and save your own effects. The program is comprehensive and has a non-linear editor that allows you to combine both 2D and 3D effects. Wildfire is not cheap but is well worth the investment for professional animators.

Wildfire runs on an AGA/030 machine with at least 8Mb of free RAM. Wildfire's memory usage varies depending on the complexity of the effects you require but in the vast majority of cases you will need 8Mb or more. The program's Memory Monitor always shows the actual memory usage.

Non-Linear Effect Editor

The non-linear editor is not quite as flexible as the linear editor but it works in a more graphical way which is easier to understand and experiment with. Each operator is shown as a box with sections for the inputs it needs and a thumbnail preview of its output. You can make the output of one operator the input of another by dragging the output thumbnail of one operator onto the input box of another. This relationship between operators is then shown by a line drawn from the output to the input. On the right hand side of the Non-Linear editor are boxes containing the initial stream which can be linked into the input of one or more operators (again by drag and drop) and another Output box which you linked from the final operator. At each stage the operator thumbnail shows the effect of all the operators applied up to that stage which allows you to see exactly what difference any changes make at each stage of the process.

Operators

Wildfire has about a hundred operators which you can apply to your stream, each one is listed in the Effect Plugins window which also has a thumbnail example of the selected effect. An operator does not necessarily apply an image processing effect (although all the standard ones are available), there are operators which load other images into one of seven temporary buffers so they can be later used by an effect which needs more than one image (for example a composor or cross fade). There are also a wide selection of 3D effects, these are really stunning and include the option to wrap the current frame around a sphere or cube or indeed any Lightwave 3D object (a selection of 3D effects are supplied). Another cool (although perhaps less useful) effect is ParPict which creates 3D effects from parametrical functions (don’t worry a variety of examples is supplied. I don’t understand what they are either), which results in some weird abstract shapes. Water and Waves3D will render your frame as if it were on a rippling lake, there’s even a 3D text generator.

Variable Select window appears which allows you to see exactly what difference any changes make at each stage of the process. This all sounds pretty complex, and indeed it is hard to take in everything Wildfire has to offer and not become overwhelmed by the number of options. However Wildfire is supplied with the background of the latest manual I have ever seen and an Amiga program. There are literally hundreds of example projects demonstrating how most of the effects can be used. All the operators which support loading settings seem to be supplied with a good selection of defaults to get you going to. It’s obvious that the authors of Wildfire really love the program and use it themselves.

File Formats

Loaders are supplied for ILM (IFF), JPEG, PPM and PNG images and YAF A Quicktime, AVI, MPEG1, MPEG2 and IFF animations. Datatypes are also supported for image loading so most bases should be covered. Single images can be loaded into a simple IFF format plus EPS. Animations can be output as MPEG, YAF A and IFF anim, each saver has a wide range of options so you can get just the quality to size ratio you want. YAF A is a special animation format supported by Wildfire and it is very flexible (now there’s a surprise ☺) allowing animations to be tailored to the system they will be displayed on, it is possible to create full screen animation that will playback smoothly on quite basic Amigas as well as ones optimised for playback on graphics cards.

Hardware

To run Wildfire you must have at least an AGA machine with an O30, FPU and 8Mb of free RAM. Wildfire is pretty memory hungry, working on full video or higher resolution images we occasionally ran out with 32Mb, on a 64Mb system we had no problems at all. An O30 will just about handle the simple 2D effects but as you get into the more complex effects the more processor power the better. Wildfire fully supports PPC boards and many effects preview almost in real time on a PPC based system. The 3D effects are particularly processor intensive. Documentation

The main documentation is supplied as a set of HTML pages which can be accessed via a simple built in HTML viewer or a browser of your choice. The internal viewer is actually pretty good because it has lots of buttons, fast links and other clutter which is not needed just to view a help file. The documents themselves are quite comprehensive and use a tutorial style to introduce you to the different aspects of the program. While there is only a fairly brief description of what each individual button does and no detailed description of the various effects Wildfire does make extensive use of UI’s bubble help feature. A detailed description of each gadget appears if you hover your pointer over it. Unusually you can get bubble help about the function of a particular window by hovering the pointer over a blank part of the window background.

Conclusion

Wildfire is great fun to use and you can achieve some fantastic effects quite easily. Once you climb the initial learning curve it is actually pretty intuitive but it requires a very high degree of flexibility. My only slight niggle with it is that the GUI can feel slow at times even on a fast PPC system because of the real-time previews. As a professional animation processor it succeeds admirably and provides great value for money. Wildfire screems out for the non-linear video editing systems which only just started to appear on the Amiga when the market started to show signs of life. For users of lower-end video systems Wildfire still has a lot to offer and the YAAF A system gets a lot out of a standard AGA machine. Additions like the MPEG saver opens up use in Internet development too. It’s even useful for general image processing and batch conversion operations. Although £100 is quite expensive for Amiga software at the moment I think Wildfire is well worth it if you have a use for the animation functions.
Ever since I have had my PPC and BVision graphics card, my Amiga has been screaming out for something worthy of all this expenditure, having said that, I have course benefited from the graphics card immensely particularly when it comes to graphical programs such as Photogenics 4 etc, but what I really mean is something that will use the permeda 2 chips very capable 3D hardware acceleration. We (Amiga users) have in the last few years have had fun poked at us when it comes to games and in particular any 3D environment type games, well I can tell you we can now at last be in the same league. And the first game that has surfaced to use this technology on the Amiga is a Playstation favourite Wipeout 2097.

Installation

The game comes on a CD-ROM which has around 77 Mb of data on it, of which most is the game itself but also included is the Warp Up and Warp 3D systems that the game requires to run. To run this game you need a pretty beefed up system the minimum requirements are as follows, PowerPC processor, BVisionPPC or CyberVisionPPC or CyberVision 3D graphics card, 24Mb of RAM (32Mb are recommended), CD-ROM drive, OS 3.0 (OS 3.1 or better is recommended), CyberGraphX or Picasso 96 (latest versions recommended), Warp Up V4, Warp 3D V2 and lowlevel.library for joypad support! If you meet these requirements (and luckily I do) then its time to install via the standard installer program, there are three different install options of small 1Mb executable only, medium (42Mb everything except MPEG movies) and full (70Mb) with options of icon types to use such as Newtonics, Glowicons and bog standard 4 colour icons.

Once installed, when you run the game the PowerUp termination requester appears (if running PowerUp) so that WarpUp can take over. The options window opens which allows you to select various options such as screenmode (I have found 640x480 to be a good balance between detail and speed), screen buffering which can be set to double, triple or triple buffering is smoother but uses additional memory but to show off to your PC owning mates run it in a window. Other options are for audio, you can choose to use AHI (so it will take advantage of a 16 bit soundcard) or Paula (Amiga audio) and whether to play in game music from CD.

Playing

So the game itself is a surreal 3D racing game in which the objective is to win funny enough, but not just win but to kill your opponents at the same time (attention Mr Schumacher). The craft themselves look a bit like super powerboats (F1) but are in fact zero gravity craft that hover just above the ground. As with most of these type of games there are power-ups to collect along the way such as weapons, speed up and energy shields etc... you get the picture! The cool thing is that when you pick up these items a voice over announces what you have just collected, and if you don’t like the particular power-up that you have just obtained then you can dump it and collect a different one... cool!

There are two modes of play arcade and time trial with various options of track and vehicle type which sets the difficulty level. There are four teams that you can choose from in ease of control such as the beginner ship which is easier to control but not as fast as the others level set so on. So far I have discovered six tracks but for all I know there may be more to unlock!

The game itself runs really quite smooth on my 240 Mhz PPC card with no noticeable slow up when the screen gets busy, even with all the detail options switched on! There are plenty of options if the game feels slow on your particular system and the options are F1 toggle in external/external views, F2 mouse sensitivity, F3 draw distance (8 levels), F4 engine trails on/full & off, F5 sky on/off, F6 fog effect, F7 filtering (smooths out pixelisation), F8 gamma (8 levels), F9 line or perspective texture mapping (linear fastest but pans to look at) and finally F10 adjusting on/off, more options that you could shake a stick at.

The craft itself can be controlled via mouse, keyboard, joystick or joystick and several combinations of these too. I have found the best to be the joystick control because you can configure eight buttons for various functions and it is very handy having the shoulder buttons.

Mick Sutton reviews the game your PowerPC and BVision have been waiting for!

Product Information

Developer: Forematt Home Comp.
Available from CD, Game Comp. & most game dealers
WWW: www.di-games.co.uk

F O R E - M A T T H O M E C O M P U T I N G

Results

Pros

- Looks brilliant, Sounds brilliant, Plays brilliant!
- High hardware requirements

Cons

- High hardware requirements
Gary Storm tries out this snappily named gadget now available at a bargain price.

The TV-Amazing comprises of itself (and power converter), a 3-way (kinky) video lead, remote control, and a very spare manual. The manual isn’t really needed (luckily), as it’s very simple to whack together.

Stick one end of the video cable in the back of your TV-Amazing, and the other end to your monitor or card output monitor of the Amiga, and the final plug into the monitor input. Plug in the power lead, aerial, and batteries (supplied) into the remote... and away you go.

It’s simply a case of pressing the TV/PC button to swap between um, oh yeah... TV and PC screens. While on the TV screen, press the ‘update’ button on the remote control, and TV-Amazing will search through the signal spectrum and store the strongest signals to some of it’s 60 channels. When pressing up or down on the remote, TV-Amazing will skip any unused channels and get straight to the good ones.

Reception strength is obviously purely up to the area you live in, and the aerial you use. I bought a £15 portable aerial from Tandy, which, although bulky-looking... isn’t brilliant (unless you love snow). A signal booster is on the shopping list, as well as some cable and adaptor so I can run the cable-TV upstairs as well (although I’ll be limited to having to watch whatever channel is selected downstream).

TV-Amazing also has 2 other AV-inputs (AV 1 and AV 2...) perfect for your video camera, or watching video’s via VCR etc., an S Video input (S-Video is for better quality video, but doesn’t have audio), and audio in and out. Each of these is easily selectable via the remote or the TV-Amazing itself. It came in very useful at a SEAL meeting where we played a WOA ‘99 video on Rob’s 17” monitor. Much better than lagging an extra TV around. A brilliant bonus of the AV 1 composite input is that you can plug your AGA composite output into it, and when selected, displays those non-gfx card modes on your monitor... so TV-Amazing is a ‘B’Mon and scan-doubler in one as well (so it’ll save you 40 quid at least). I reviewed it using this method... fantastic.

However, that doesn’t take away the fact that the TV-Amazing does exactly what it’s supposed to do (and more), and it does very well and very easily.

The only possible scuppering could be that it connected via an ISA bus. Hmm. We knew we could power the board with a little bit of a fiddle with the ISA connector, but would the board want more than just the power? (See the results).

F or the WOA show, I did my best (with much help from many sources) to get together material to edit for the production of a video to be shown. It came out OK, but nothing brilliant. The main reason was because the material was limited to demos (thanks a lot to Philippe Ferucci and Julian Sadotti), and stuff I managed to grab from real videos made by IOM productions (Amiga videos) and Nova Design (ImageFX/Aladdin 4D promo video).

Grabbing normal video from the Amiga (via the composite port, or the monitor port if you have a SCART lead) is fine, but you’re limited to 256 colours, and PAL resolutions. You also can’t record any software that normally utilises the graphics card, without going through the hassle of changing each screen to a PAL mode, and going back to SB so that it goes through the normal monitor port. Pain in the ass, and doesn’t show off the software to its full effect.

I would have loved to grab video from the graphics card, but I found out nearly all the VGA to PAL converters were PC only, as they relied on PC software. The cheapest non-software-driven beast I found was £200. Geez.

A couple of months after the show, and luckily Rob discovers a converter in Maplin that isn’t seen to rely on any software... the VGA2PAL from Applied Technology. It was only £30 for the 640x480 version, and £50 for the 1280x1024/800x600/640x480 flavour. The only possible scuppering could be that it connected via an ISA bus.

Hmm. We knew we could power the board with a little bit of a fiddle with the ISA connector, but would the board want more than just the power?

Ingredients

1x VGA2PAL card
1x Power Splitter.
Maplin Part No. DG43W - £2.99
1x 8bit ISA connector (62pin edge).
Maplin Part No. JC03 - £1.45
Multimeter, soldering iron, solder, some wire, and a steady hand.

A little bit of research on the Internet later (The Hardware Book, http://www.blackdown.org/~hwb/), and we found the pin-outs for the ISA connector that we needed, telling us which pins chipked through which power. After inspecting the tracks active on the ISA slot on the VGA2PAL, we were happy to find that it only needed ground and +5v.

We then needed to find out what power the wires on the power splitter were.

Eventually we found the reference material at an Amiga site in Canada (www.nationalalgima.com). A quick call to Mick, and he rushed over to do the deed. Before he did that, though, he soldered (with a little difficulty as the pins are so small, and we went cheap by cutting and using the thick wire) the unused bit of the splitter. Mick did cut half the diameter of the wire out through, to make it slightly easier) the relevant powered wires from the splitter to the associated pins on the ISA connector.

Doing the Earths was a little harder, as there were three, and they all had to be connected. Some deft cutting, bending and soldering was required, and Mick did the trick (if messy by his standards).

It’s at this point that we powered the ISA connector, and Mick tested the voltage of his handwork with a multi-meter, to double-check the power supply. Lucky we checked, as the VGA2PAL would have been FRIED2FUCK, as we found out that National Amiga had it backwards on the +5 and +12 power front from the splitter, DOH! To save having to do it all over again, we took the power-splitter’s head apart, and swapped the red and yellow wires around... which is why you see that the red wire is a +12V, and the yellow wire is the +5V in this case. Slightly backward, thanks to a certain misinformation.

Anyway... Mick cleaned up after doing the dirty deed, and we tested out the beast in Rob’s A3000 via his graphics card convert to the TV. And it worked! Well, actually, it kind of worked. The VGA2PAL is supposed to be able to convert the 1280x1024 mode, but... we don’t think so! Couldn’t get that one going at all, although it was great in 800x600 and 640x480 modes... 24 bit colour on your TV, ready to be recorded for your video masterpiece. Fantastic! I e-mailed Applied Technology about the missing mode but they didn’t reply.

Rob’s only gripe (apart from the non-swap-able connectors) to get together material (Amiga videos) and Nova Design (ImageFX/Aladdin 4D promo video).

The only problems I’ve encountered with this box of TV tricks, is that the video cable that connects to the Amiga monitor output is a tad short, which means the TV-Amazing can be a little awkward to get straight, depending on your set-up (not the end of the world though), and
Preparind a Hard Drive Tutorial

This tutorial will guide you through installing a new hard drive on your Amiga. It assumes you don't currently have a hard drive installed, or you want to start from scratch by installing Workbench on your new hard disk. If you are adding an additional hard disk to your Amiga follow the steps from number 3.

1. Install the new hard drive physically in your Amiga, then insert the Install disk in the floppy drive and turn the machine on.

2. Open the Install disk by double clicking on its icon then open the HDTools drawer in the window that appears. In the HDTools window you should see an HDToolbox icon. Now double click on this icon which should also be on the Workbench. Move the windows so you can see both the HDTools and Ram Disk windows then drag the HDToolbox icon to the Ram Disk window, the file will be copied.

3. If your new hard disk is connected to the Amiga’s built-in IDE (or SCSI if you have an A3000) interface simply double click the HDToolbox icon to run the program. If your hard disk is connected to a different interface you need to tell HDToolbox where to look for it. Click once on the HDToolbox icon in the Ram Disk window then choose Information from the Icons menu. In the tooltypes section change (or add if it’s not there) the line SCSIDEVICE_NAME=mydevice where mydevice.device is the name of the device driver you have hard disk controller uses. This name should be in the documentation for your controller, we also had a list of the more common ones on page 16 of Clubbed issue 4. Once you have set correctly click Save in the information window then start HDToolbox.

4. HDToolbox will then search the interface you selected, when the search is complete a list of Hard Drives in System is shown. Look in the list for the drive you have just added, it will be listed as Unknown in the Status column and will probably have the manufacturer’s name in the Drive Type column. Select the new drive by clicking on it’s list entry.

5. Now we need to get the information on the size of the drive, where these drive statistics are contained on the Change Drive Type button. On the Select a Drive Type screen click Define New (NOTE leave the Drive Types: cycle gadget set to SCSI even if you are installing an IDE drive), then on the Define a New Drive Type screen click Read Configuration. This will read the details of the drive. If your drive is greater than 4.055 GB versions of HDToolBox to 3.5 to show a small or even negative value for Size, ignore this it is a display glitch and will not cause problems.

6. Once you have read the configuration click OK twice to get back to the main screen. Now with the drive still selected click on the Partition Drive button. The Partition Drive screen appears where you can define the partitions on your drive. At the top of the window the long bars represents the capacity of your hard disk. Each sections choosing the partition sizes, by default there are two equal sized partitions.

7. The partition sizes by clicking on the partition you want to change then drag the arrow to get the size you want. To add a new partition, size the ones existing to some space, then click New Partition and finally click in the space you want the new partition to occupy. To delete a partition click on it then press the Partition button. NOTE: No changes are made to the drive until you click OK and then Save Changes to Drive on the main screen so don’t worry if you make a mistake at this stage.

8. For each partition you have created you need to alter the settings, for this click on the partition then check and if necessary alter the following options:

- Partition Device Name: This is a short identifier for the partition (you can give it a more descriptive volume name later). Usually the first partition is called D00 (Disk Hard Zero) with the others following on in series (D1H, D2E etc.) New partitions you add will be called CHANGE_ME by default, make sure you do, also check you don’t have two partitions with the same name.

- Bootable: If you want your Amiga to boot from a partition make sure you check (on the box to put a tick in it) the Bootable option, usually just one partition would be bootable and this is where you install Workbench.

- To get the best performance and avoid some potential problems it is a good idea to alter some of the advanced options. To do this click on the Advanced Options check box, extra settings appear in the window.

- File System: Change: Click this button to get a page of file system options:

  - File system block size: Setting this to 1024 from the default of 512 bytes by default so the default 32GBs is only 15KB. If you have a reasonable amount of memory it’s a good idea to increase this up to at least 100 (50K).

File System: Change: Click this button to get a page of file system options:

Max Transfer: The default value of 0!!!!!! can cause problems with some IDE hard disks (files become corrupted when you copy them) so it is wise to always set this to the lower value of 0x1e0.

File system block size: Setting this to 1024 from the default of 512 will considerably improve performance particularly on deleting files.

Once you’ve finished setting the file system options for a partition click OK to get back to the Partitioning screen.

9. When you have checked these settings for ALL the partitions on the drive click OK to get back to the main screen, now click Save Changes to Drive to do just that, a warning message will come up if you had any existing partitions on the drive which will be destroyed. Click OK if you’re happy, then HDToolBox will ask you to reboot your system, make sure not to forget to do this or you will lose all your changes. If you want to install the hard disk to your Amiga then you must now click on the Install Disk button. If you want to install a new hard drive (not replacing an existing one) then click the Install button.

10. Once the system has rebooted you should see an icon on the Workbench for each of the new partitions you created each of these partitions needs to be formatted, just like you would do with a floppy disk. So click on each icon, select Format disk from the Workbench Icon menu. In the format requester enter a name for the partition (this is usually a descriptive name relating to what you will store on it), if you don’t use it if you can switch off Put Trashcan, switch on Fast File System and International Mode, DO NOT switch on Directory Cache for hard drives.

11. When each disk has been formatted you can begin to use them as any other disk. If you want to install Workbench on to one of your new partitions open the Install drawer on your Install disk and run the installation in the language of your choice. Remember to install onto the partition you made bootable, the installer should select this automatically.
Support

3.1: Introduction to the Shell

What scares inexperienced Amiga users but is actually quite warm and friendly when you get to know it? The AmigaDOS shell of course, Robert Williams abandons analogies to find out more...!

The shell gives you access to the Amiga's command line interface. This is another method of controlling the Amiga which, unlike Workbench, uses text commands rather than windows, icons and menus manipulated with the mouse. One of the nice things about the Amiga is that you can use any combination of the shell and Workbench that you like, you may find some activities are easier from a shell and others from the Workbench. If you install KingCON the shell is even better integrated with the Workbench.

Opening a Shell

Double click the Shell icon in the System drawer of your Workbench partition. To open a new shell window from an existing one or from the Workbench Execute Command requester type new-shell and press return.

Command Lines

In a shell window you type a command line and press enter to perform an action. A command line consists of three parts, the command, its options and arguments. A command is a program, stored either in ROM or on disk, which performs an action. Arguments are additional information required by the command and the options tell the command exactly how you want the task performed. Here is a typical command line:

list ram: DIRS

Where list is the command, ram: is an argument, in this case the directory to list and DIRS is an option telling the command to list only directories.

When you enter a command the Amiga looks first in the resident list, this is a list of commands available in ROM and any loaded into RAM using the resident command. To get a list of all the resident commands enter the following in a shell-resident command:

path

If the command is not found in the resident list the Amiga looks in a list of directories called the search path, this is set using the path command. Enter:

path

to see a list of the directories on the search path. Notice that the current directory is listed at the top of the search path so a command there will be found. Most commands (including 3rd party ones not supplied with the OS) are kept in the C: directory, enter:

c:

to see a listing of all the files in your C: directory.

Getting information about a command.

Almost all commands contain some information about how they are used, this can vary from a rather cryptic line listing all the possible options to quite a verbose text. Most commands written specifically for the Amiga will give you this help if you enter them with a "f" as their only option, for example entering:

gzip -h

This complex command allows you to list the files and subdirectories within a directory or volume. Its most simple use is list <directory>, for example:

list sys:

...and a list of the directories on the system:

CommandOutput

Anatomy of a Shell

Close

Ideo*, Zoom, Depth

Gadgets marked * added by KingCON.

Size and Scroll bar*

Troubleshooting

WARNING!

Some of the commands listed here are potentially destructive, the nature of the shell is that they don't usually have the "Are You Sure" messages most Workbench commands use. For example the delete command will delete the file you specify as soon as you press Enter, take care to double check your command line before executing it. If you're not sure which files a command will effect try using the same path (and the ALL keyword if needed) with the list command.

Common Commands

There are many AmigaDOS commands and each one has many options, there's no way I could cover even one or two commands in depth here. Therefore I have chosen three useful commands and mentioned their basic usage. I hope this will encourage you to grab an AmigaDOS book and learn more.

list

This command allows you to list the files and subdirectories within a directory or volume. Useful options include:

SINCE <date> Allows you to list only files created or modified after the specified date

Example:

list sys: SINCE yesterday

FILES Lists only files.
DIRS Lists only directories.

assign

Controls the assignment of logical device names to target directories or files. Assigning a logical device name to a directory or file with a complex path allows you to refer to it more easily. Installers often add assignment statements to the start-up files so the program can find its data files. Entering assign alone will list all the volumes, assigns and devices available on the system.

Example:

list sys: ALL SINCE yesterday

delete

This command deletes the specified files from disk, this command does not give you any warnings so be careful when using it.

Which will list all the files in the root directory of your boot partition.

Useful options include:

ALL Scans all the subdirectories within the specified directory
FILES Lists all the files
DIRS Lists all the subdirectories

Example:

delete ram:test ALL

Using the Shell

The shell has various short cuts that make entering commands easier, firstly there are a full set of editing functions. You have learned your left keys, back space and delete as you would in a word processor to correct any errors you make. There are also plenty of special editing short cuts, here are some of the most useful:

Ctrl + X Clears the command line.
Ctrl + K Deletes everything from the cursor to the end of the command line.
Ctrl + U Deletes everything from the cursor to the beginning of the command line.

Probably the most important time saver is the的历史 feature, pressing the upper arrow on your keyboard will recall the last command you entered, keep pressing up to step back through the history of commands you executed this session. Once you have recalled a command similar to the one you want to execute you can edit it then press Enter to execute.

KingCON

While the Amiga shell contains a lot of nice features and is far better than DOS on a PC there's plenty of room for improvement. KingCON gives your shell window far more features and is especially useful as it integrates with Workbench. As KingCON was reviewed in Clubbed issue one I won't go into too much detail here however it's key features are a scroll bar which allows you to scroll through long command outputs, Tab file completion which completes the current file name when you press tab or presents a list if there are multiple matches and drag and drop support so dropping a file icon onto the shell window inserts the icon's path at the cursor position on the command line.
This tutorial will be primarily based on the Cinema 4D package. This is simply because: everyone has got it (it's been on several cover disks), it was very inexpensive, it's very easy to use and extremely versatile. What more could you ask?

First set-up your editor preferences to your own specifications (Menu Project/Settings/Editor Preferences). From here select a screen mode that you prefer, Mine is 800 x 600 it is a bit larger than the window so that you can no longer see the lines that made it up. But you can still see the axes.

Now something isn't quite right, wood grain manager. I find it helpful to be able to get an idea of what objects will be like when rendered. OK. So it uses more of your chip ram. If your project is getting close to using up all of your ram you will have a fast processor, you will see your complete picture. Click the left mouse button to get back to the Cinema screen.

If your piece of paper or table top looks more like it has been tie dyed with streaks of colour rather than a texture you might have altered the unselected colour and another plane appears. This other plane is our texture and as you can see bears little relationship to the plane it is supposed to cover. In my project the texture plane is elongated and perpendicular to the central axis.

The texture plane for the paper object adjusted so it lies flat.

If you have got the Texture bar open? If not then open it. First click on the centre right icon that looks like two intersecting lines with the angle indicated. Then click on the paper object after the Crumple operation.

For the sake of simplicity, and keeping memory requirements low, be our main back-drop and fill the screen. To this end, you need to at least do the following:

You may at this point wish to save this disk just in case. Check Save As from the Project/Save As menu item. If you find it more convenient to have the texture plane at the top you might like to drag it up to the top of the requester, I dragged it right down to 0%. When you're happy click OK. Now our texture is ready we have assigned it to the table object, as the table is still selected right click on the Wood sphere in the Material Manager and choose Assign.

You should now be on the main C4D screen.

To add a simple texture to the table top we will need to select the Object/Primitives/Plane menu item, but remember to hold down the shift key. Now click on the Object/Primitives/Plane menu item, but remember to hold down the shift key. Now click on the Plane icon. This is to select the object only, as we don’t wish to enlarge the whole scene. Next select the Scale icon. Now do a fast process to the scene and you will see your complete picture. Click the left mouse button to get back to the Cinema screen.

Work area edit

Open display parameters

Redraw

X, Y, Z axes

Co-ordinate system

Magnify

Zoom

Move

Inverses

Texture editor

Texture axis edit

Translate

Scale

Object axis edit

Point edit

Object/edt

Texture Problems?

If you have got the Texture bar open? If not then open it. First click on the centre right icon that looks like two intersecting lines with the angle indicated. Then click on the paper object after the Crumple operation.

The paper object after the Crumple operation.

Another plane is needed so select Object/Primitives/Plane menu item, but remember to hold down the shift key. If you find it more convenient to have the texture plane at the top you might like to drag it up to the top of the requester, I dragged it right down to 0%. When you’re happy click OK. Now our texture is ready we have assigned it to the table object, as the table is still selected right click on the Wood sphere in the Material Manager and choose Assign.

For the sake of simplicity, and keeping memory requirements low, be our main back-drop and fill the screen. To this end, you need to at least do the following:

You may at this point wish to save this disk just in case. Check Save As from the Project/Save As menu item. If you find it more convenient to have the texture plane at the top you might like to drag it up to the top of the requester, I dragged it right down to 0%. When you’re happy click OK. Now our texture is ready we have assigned it to the table object, as the table is still selected right click on the Wood sphere in the Material Manager and choose Assign.

You should now be on the main C4D screen.

To add a simple texture to the table top we will need to select the Object/Primitives/Plane menu item, but remember to hold down the shift key. Now click on the Object/Primitives/Plane menu item, but remember to hold down the shift key. Now click on the Plane icon. This is to select the object only, as we don’t wish to enlarge the whole scene. Next select the Scale icon. Now do a fast process to the scene and you will see your complete picture. Click the left mouse button to get back to the Cinema screen.

Now something isn’t quite right, wood grain manager. I find it helpful to be able to get an idea of what objects will be like when rendered. OK. So it uses more of your chip ram. If your project is getting close to using up all of your ram you will have a fast processor, you will see your complete picture. Click the left mouse button to get back to the Cinema screen.

If you have got the Texture bar open? If not then open it. First click on the centre right icon that looks like two intersecting lines with the angle indicated. Then click on the paper object after the Crumple operation.

The paper object after the Crumple operation.
I made my “sheet of paper” larger than the window again so as to appear to be in tight contact with the bottom of the wax. The paper was selected so that the object icon is depressed. Then go to menu Item Tools/ Crumple and use the default setting. Now what we need to do is to find intersecting points that make up our plane have been lowered and the other half have been raised (or vice versa). The plane you have lowered are now below our table top and the others are above. A quick scanline render will confirm this. To overcome this switch to either XY or ZY view by pressing the appropriate button in the tool bar. Zoom in by right clicking on the magnifying glass icon and selecting Magnify Glass from the pop-up, then drag a square around the table top and paper objects. You can then see more clearly. Now make sure that only Y is selected on the axes section of the tool bar. Move should still be selected so drag the sheet of paper up as to be slightly above the half way mark. The Find Tool will do another quick render just to confirm that all is as it should be. I always do little renders like this as it is difficult to try and sort out problems out of context if you don’t know exactly what is happening. OK. You could leave your piece of paper as it is as it appears to fit in quite well just as it is. To try and make the paper look more authentic we can add a texture. Make sure that the plane that is our sheet of paper is selected and therefore drawn in white in the perspective window.

It makes life easier if the objects are named the way that I am naming them. From the Edit menu select Object Manager then click on Plane in the left hand list and change the name in the bottom string gradient to Table, press Return. The other plane should be called Plane. Do the same with the plane that we are going to use for our “sheet of paper” from the Edit menu select Object Manager then click on Plane in the left hand list and change the name in the bottom string gradient to Paper, press Return. Now close the Object Manager window.

From the windows menu make sure that the Material Manager and Texture Bar windows are open (if they are not then close them by clicking on the close button). From the Edit menu select Object Manager then click on Plane in the left hand list and change the name in the bottom string gradient to Object/Primitives while holding shift down. Change Circle Segments to 24 and Radius to 75. Move the cylinder up in the Y axis so that the point where the bottom of the cylinder is about level with the first section of points in the “dome”. Now for the tricky bit (Have you saved?). Now you should have a rectangle with an upside down V cut in the bottom. From the Edit menu choose Select/Group. Or more simply press G on the keyboard. Now click on the Object button to bring us back to our wire frame. Select Cylinder from Object/Primitives while holding shift down. From the Extra/Structure menu select Merge, the two “tails” become one. A little fat I think. Click the Object button and then Scale, select Y axis. Now trim a bit off. Apply a nice fabric texture, again C4D has an excellent range if you have the full CD otherwise you could just choose a suitable colour. If the texture looks wrong when you render it you could try a quick scanline render sort it out following the Texture Problems box out as we did before.

The Seal

So now onto the wax seal itself. Save the ribbons and start a new project. Start with a keyboard, and click on paper on the left hand list and Material in the selector on the far right. You then have to make sure that your paper object should be highlighted there. If not make sure that it is selected by clicking on it once. Now lots make sure the texture is correctly applied, in the Texture Bar select the Square and Chequer Board icons. Time for a quick render. If your paper texture doesn’t display then take a look at the Texture Problems box out.

Sphere from the Object/Primitives menu remember to holding down the shift key. In the window click on Perfect Sphere on the top left to check. Then change the number of Segments to 36 and click on OK. Go to one of the side views (XY or ZY) and zoom in so that the sphere very nearly fills the window, or right select Active Object from the Magnify icon pop-up. Now click on the Points icon. Hold down the Ctrl key and with the mouse drag out a box to select all the points from the second row below halfway downwards. These row, turn white. Press the Del key to get rid of them. You are then left with an evenly voluminous lofted curve (just for Glory). Then select all the points from and including the third row up from halfway to the top. Now click the Scale button and Y axis only and align all the points so that they form a straight line in the side view. This gives us a flat top to our dome. Click on the MOVE button, select Y axis only and move this entire, turn white. Press the second row of points. You should be left with something looking like the screenshot:

The seal and cylinder objects positioned for the Boolean A/B operation.

Now click the Object button to bring back our wire frame. Select Cylinder from Object/Primitives while holding shift down. From the Extra/Structure menu select Merge, the two “tails” become one. A little fat I think. Now you should have a rectangle with an upside down V cut in the bottom. From the Edit menu choose Select/Group. Or more simply press G on the keyboard. Now move the cylinder up in the Y axis so that the point where the bottom of the cylinder is about level with the first section of points in the “dome”. Now for the tricky bit (Have you saved?).

The finished ribbon object.

CLUBBED - Issue 5

Doctor, doctor my seal’s got bunions! What you are trying to achieve is a sort of paint splat effect. As paint is thinner than wax you don’t want to go over the top. Try to make sure that you make the tool path at an angle to the “dome”. You can do this by a quick scanline render sort it out following the Texture Problems box out as we did before.

The seal

So now onto the wax seal itself. Save the ribbons and start a new project. Start with a
Now you’re ready for the big moment, the final render! For this choose Raytracing from the Render pop-up menu. In the settings requester choose a suitable resolution and, if you want to display the image while it is rendered, set a Screenmode. Now click Render, in the Rendering progress requester you will see the frame by frame sequence of the image as it renders. Once it has finished click Save frame to save the final image to a file (the format is set in the Raytracing settings requester).

That’s it! what else is there to say! Well lots actually but I am running out of time. I must just say that the hardest part for me was selecting the textures. This automatically sets the background to the textures that you select. What you select will be the only way that you can get rid of the background, simply click on the background colour in the texture window to the right of the texture file requester. If you select a render mode with your right mouse button you get a number of rendering options/preferences for that mode. Selecting a screenmode in the Screenmodes requester section underneath click on the texture file requester, select the texture that you just created. After a short while the small preview window just to the right of the screen will contain your texture. You may have trouble recognising it as such but not to worry it’s there. You can also see a small representation in the top right corner. In the button bank at the top click on Genlock, again load the texture in the same manner as you did for Colour. Observe the small square top right corner, you can see your texture wrapped around this. Notice that the background colour is the same as it was in PPaint. Now get rid of the background, simply click on the background colour in the texture window to the right of the texture file requester. This automatically sets the background colour in the Genlock section just above the texture section. The fourth slider should be set at about 10%. Your text should now be mapped onto a movable sphere. Click OK. Select the paper in the perspective window by pressing “W” on the keyboard and select the list, clicking OK once more. Now for another tricky bit, right click on the Texture Axis icon and just above the wavy line it says paper or whatever you called your texture that you are using for the paper. Select generate new and paper or whatever you used appears again. Back to your materials manager window with your paper object still selected the paper texture button in the materials manager should appear depressed the others stand proud. Click on the texture button and that becomes depressed. Then right click on and select assign. So what we have done is, assigned two textures to our paper. If you right click on the Texture Axis icon again and you should have the paper and texture text lists above the wavy line. If you have not it may be a good idea to load in the table top and paper objects from earlier on. You can then practice this again as I know from experience that it is fiddly to say the least. You did keep them separate didn’t you? Finally add a light source from the primitives menu and position it toward the rear right and make it low and moody. When you’re happy with the scene be sure to save the final version.

By Roy Burton

Cinema 4D for Beginners

If you have problems installing from the cover CD an updated installer is still available from the CU Amiga WEB site:

http://www.cu-amiga.co.uk

On starting the program for the first time you will be asked for various details and a serial number which is supplied with the commercial software. The serial number for the CUCD 27 version should have been printed in the magazine but unfortunately they were omitted. For some time Hairy would supply the serial number but they have now stopped this service so there is no legal way to obtain.

SUPPORT

Keep Up-to-Date with the clubbed-announce Mailing List

Clubbed now has its own Internet mailing list to keep connected readers better informed about the magazine. The mailing list called clubbed-announce is hosted by the OneList service.

We will post a minimum of one update on the list per month but your mail box will not be flooded because this list can only be posted to by the editor.

How To Join

Subscribing to the list is free, just send a blank eMail to:

clubbed-announce-subscribe@onelist.com

Or go to the list page on the OneList website, if you subscribe to the website you will need to register (if you haven’t already for another list):

www.onelist.com/community/clubbed-announce-top-onelist.html

We hope the list will keep you better informed about Clubbed and encourage you to join.

Join SEAL

If you live in or around Essex why not come along to a SEAL meeting? We’re a lively group who meet every other Friday evening at Northlands Park Community Centre in Basildon. We offer help, advice and demonstrations at meetings and someone is always available to lend a helping hand in between.

If you decide to join membership costs £2.50 per month (or £25 if you pay yearly) and includes access to all meetings, refreshments and 4 issues of Clubbed a year.

For more information and directions to the venue:

http://www.seal-amiga.co.uk

Please note all these are available via the clubbed-announce mailing list.

SUPPORT
Now Showing

Heretic II
Shogo
Coming Soon...
SiN

Games Revolution

fxPaint

This example image includes several fxPaint effects including the Pyro plug-in on the right and the Supernova effect on the left. The fractal (created in fxPaint) was rubbed through using the anti-aliased text as an alpha channel. Finally the Button Border effect was used to get the raised edge.

Wildfire 7 PPC

Wildfire’s powerful effects can be used to create stunning animated transitions between images....

Cinema 4D

The end result of Robert Tiffen’s Cinema 4D tutorial which starts on page 34.