

May - Volume 12, No 5

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Australian Commodore &

AMIGA

For Professional and Home Users

Review

**APRIL 21st
AMIGA
BOUGHT!**

SCSI for your A1200

Directory Opus 5

Commodore auction update

Instant textures with Essence

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A3000
A4000

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The new double speed CD-ROM for the Amiga 600/1200 plugs directly into the PCMCIA port and provides a direct SCSI interface, allowing up to six additional peripherals to be connected, for example: Syquest Drives, Hard Drives, Flatbed Scanners and DAT Drives. What's more the Power CD-ROM features a "Hot-Plug" and "Un-Plug" even when your Amiga is switched on.

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The Personal Animation Recorder is shaping up to be one of the most powerful and popular Digital Video cards for the Amiga.

Its quality has passed the broadcast test at many of Australia's commercial television networks. By now I'm sure you have seen the PAR output on television, but not know you've been watching it!

Many of our clients are using the PAR with 3D rendering packages such as Lightwave to produce TV commercials, Music videos and much, much more.

Here are some of the reasons the PAR has become so popular :-

- Broadcast resolution output
- Real time 25fps Playback of video
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- Y/C output (S-VHS® Hi8®)
- Composite Video output
- Interface with any Amiga graphics s/w

With the Capture board you add even more versatility :-

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- Y/C input (S-VHS® Hi8®)
- Composite Video input



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With the range of Digital Audio cards from Sunrize you can add 8 Tracks of non-linear audio to your PAR Digital video. Lock it all together with SMPTE timecode for perfect, frame accurate, video and audio synchronisation.

There are two versions of the cards available. The AD1012, a 12bit, 4 track record and playback card. Also the AD516, a 16bit stereo version with sample rates up to 48KHz. The AD516 also has 8 Track record and playback capability.

Both cards work with the powerful Studio16 V3.01 software. Drag and drop, timeline editing, real time fades and cross fades. True broadcast audio excellence for your Amiga.



Here at last.... an affordable, broadcast quality non-linear editing system has finally arrived in the form of V-Lab Motion!

Its a fully functional non-linear editor and real time 24-bit animation recorder with audio support via the Toccata 16 bit stereo sampler card.

Full time line edit control with A/B roll type interfades and wipes. Also keying and "Blue Box" effects.

V-Lab Motion was "product of the year" in AMIGA PLUS (Germany) as well as a "Perfect 10" an AMIGA COMPUTING First.

Here are some of the features of the V-Lab motion system :-

- Outstanding quality non-linear editor
- 16 bit audio with the Toccata
- Complete AReXX support
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- Digital character generator
- Chroma keying for "Blue Box" FX
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- Composite & Y/C outputs
- Freely adjustable data rates
- Optional Component in/outputs
- Powerful Movie Shop Software
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- Use as animation recorder
- \$ 2788 for V-Lab Motion
- \$ 869 for Toccata

"The V-Lab Motion system will blow your socks off!"

- Michael Ricks, Producer/Director
- SUNSTONE PICTURES, Phoenix, Arizona

SCALA MM400

This latest upgrade to SCALA adds multi-platform support with the addition of the File format EX's, New text wipes, better anti-aliasing of text, X/Y font scaling and more. New EX's for the Neptune genlock are also included in this new upgrade.



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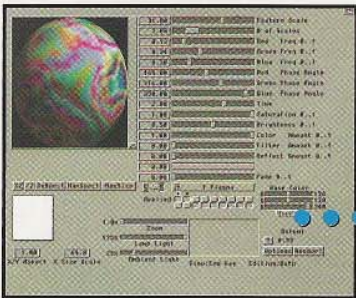
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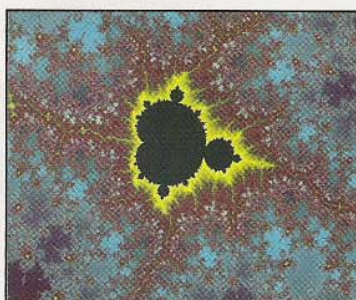
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Cover created by Jarrod Pudsey
Image: 1500 x 2000
Program: Essence and Lightwave
Machine: A4000/040/40MHz

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IMPORTANT READER SURVEY

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Latest CD32 and A1200 games on page 65

Cheap A500 accelerator

▶ Amiga 500 owners looking for more speed for less money will be interested to hear about the A500 Turbo 68020i, which gives the 500 the same processing power as an Amiga 1200.

You get a 14MHz 68020 CPU and a 68881 maths co-processor (the A1200 has a socket for a 68881, but the standard Australian model left it empty), and the accelerator plugs into the 68000 socket, with the old chip plugging into the new board so you can drop back to 68000 to get badly written programs running.

The A500 Turbo 68020i has a single SIMM socket for standard 1Mb or 4Mb SIMM modules, and doesn't work without the extra RAM plugged in - which is fine, because accelerators have to have 32 bit RAM to do any real speed anyway. Without any RAM, it's currently available at an introductory price of \$215 - not bad, when you realise that a 4Mb SIMM to match will set you back around the \$250 mark.

Contact Image Domain on (07) 852 2720 for more information.

Adelaide Amiga group offers free trial

▶ Your first three visits to a meeting of the Adelaide Amiga User Group are free; if you want to join it only costs \$20 a year plus \$2 entrance for the whole family.

The club is Amiga only, and has the usual help and expert advice, product demonstrations and discount merchandise.

Club meetings are every Monday night except public holidays, with doors opening at 7:30PM and the meeting starting at 8PM. The venue is the library at Mawson High School, Colton Avenue, Hove.

There's also a Northern meeting on the 2nd and 4th Friday of each month, also starting at 7:30 and held at the Salvation Army Hall, corner Maxwell and Jennifer Crescents, Ingle Farm.

For more information, contact Mark Johnson on (08) 370 9107.

GVP in trouble

▶ Great Valley Products, makers of fine Amiga hardware for a very long time, have been hit hard by the continuing Commodore confusion. So hard, in fact, that they're reported to be closing their doors at the end of April. This doesn't mean the GVP team will vanish in a puff of smoke, of course, and doesn't even necessarily mean current product lines will die - it's rumoured that a new company may be purchasing the intellectual property rights to GVP products and taking up the torch.

In any case, local GVP distributors Peripheral World have assured us that they'll be fulfilling their legal obliga-

tions as regards warranty repairs on GVP products and also doing non-warranty repairs, since the GVP service department has been taken over by the two most senior technicians and turned into a new company.

Custom GVP SIMMs will also still be available, as they were made for GVP by another company that will keep on making them as long as people want to buy them.

So while it's sad to see a stalwart of the Amiga industry topple, it doesn't look as if GVP's going to hit the ground too hard.

Contact Peripheral World on (03) 725 3233 for more information.

Green disks

▶ When software companies put their products on disks, they want good ones. If they use dodgy disks, they'll have to send out replacements to irritated customers. In fact, the software companies use the very best disks, ones that score higher in the certification tests than the premium brand disks consumers can buy.

But what happens to the large numbers of disks in packages that aren't sold? They used to be junked - a huge waste of top grade disks that had only been written to once. GreenDisk is a US company that noticed this, and started recycling the disks, putting new labels on them which say in small print "Printed on recycled paper (of course!)" and distributing them in herbal looking recycled cardboard boxes.

In small quantities, the GreenDisk prices are steep - \$24.90 for ten IBM formatted high density disks. But once you start getting into larger quantities they get a lot more reasonable. Fifty double densities, IBM formatted but fine for Amiga use, cost \$1.70 a disk including tax. Now, this is more than twice the price of no name disks in the same quantity, but you're getting top grade disks, ideal for backups or small scale software distribution. One hundred double density disks cost \$1.55 each, and it drops to \$1.20 each for quantities of 1000 or more. Even if you ignore the environmental friendliness, these are good prices for top grade disks.

Contact Greenworld Office Products on (03) 796 2413 for more information.

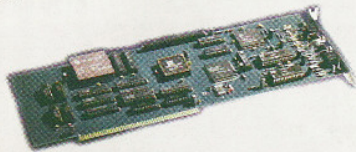
Studio 2

Amiga Review recently ran an article on the excellent STUDIO 2 print package, but we neglected to put the contact details on the end. STUDIO 2's available from GSOFT on (08) 284 1266.

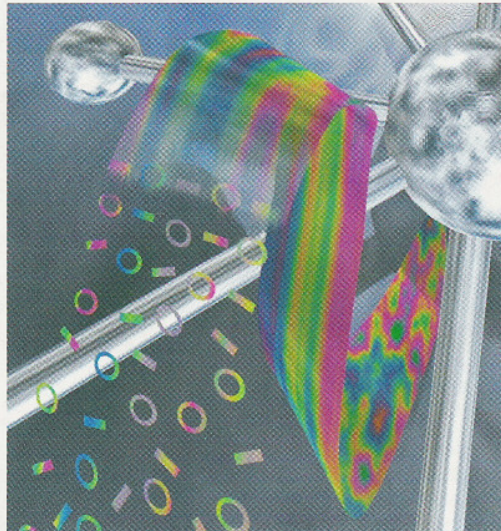
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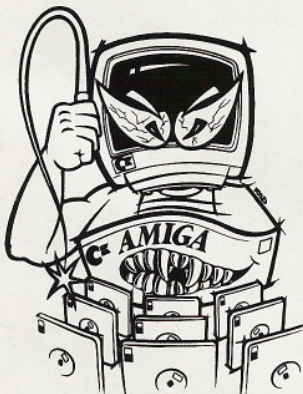
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- A600 16bit PCMCIA Credit Card RAM 4MB \$ 399-

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- GVP A1291 (Suit A1230 II) \$ 159-

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- 1202, 68882 @ 20MHz, 0MB \$ 229-
- 1202, 68882 @ 33MHz, 0MB \$ 275-
- Cobra '030MMU 28MHZ \$ 299-
- no Co-Pro, 0MB
- Cobra '030EC 40MHz \$ 449-
- no Co-Pro, 0MB
- Mongoose '030MMU 50MHz \$ 699-
- 50MHz 68882, 0MB
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HiSoft Pascal	\$199.00	Vista Pro 3	\$ 99.95
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Hollywood FX Lite	\$ 79.00	Wordworth V3.1	\$139.00

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ESCOM wins for now...

Right now, April 20th is drawing to a close in the United States. News from the days auction has started to trickle in. This is the last page to go to the printer. Tonight, as the U.S. wakes up, there will be a court hearing to finalise the outcome. Unfortunately, Amiga Review couldn't wait any longer, so it's off to press with the best information we have so far.

The auction we hoped would be a battle between the two favourites, CEI and Commodore U.K, turned out to be something else. According to sources at the auction in New York last night, only two companies entered the bidding - ESCOM and DELL Computer. No one else made the required one million dollar deposit to enter the fray.

The Dell Computer bid was highest, however it was subject to allowing them time to study the technology patents. Not surprisingly, this request was declined and ESCOM's lower bid accepted. So, for now, ESCOM wins the auction. Is this the final chapter in the Commodore sale? At the court proceedings tomorrow, it is expected the ESCOM bid will be met with some serious objections. No one knows if any of these objections will stand. According to Jason Compton, of AMReport, the these objections include:-

1: The trustees of Commodore's various manufacturing companies (actually, this is the party known as the "Netherlands Trustees", who hold Commodore BV, Commodore Philippines BV, Commodore Manufacturing Contractor BV, and Commodore UK) object to the terms of the sale that allow the assets of their companies to be transferred to the bidder in the Commodore International

sale. In other words, they want to keep the Philippines assets and Commodore UK to themselves.

2: The creditors of Commodore Business Machines, Inc. (US) object to the terms that specify what the liquidator will do with the funds received: as it stands now, they feel that only the \$US1.75 million specified to be held in the US will ever get to them in any fraction, while the rest will be used by the C= International liquidator to pay his bills. They don't object to the sale itself, just the destination of the proceeds.

3: IBM says that on July 1, 1991, IBM and Commodore signed a rather broad-based agreement licensing their patents out to each other. Not all of them, but quite a few. Commodore's license from IBM ran out in 1993, when they stopped paying the bills. IBM's, so they claim, is paid in full. As such, they object to the sale of the patents they hold license to without their permission. IBM claims that their license cannot be dissolved by a liquidation sale.

So, the creditors don't like the legal boys getting all the money, the Netherlands gang don't want some liquidator on the other side of the planet dictating what happens to their companies, and IBM appear to be taking a shot in the dark. What happened to Commodore U.K. and CEI? Speculation in this office has revolved around deals done with ESCOM before the auction day - or other deals in the pipeline. By the time you read this there should be more news - if you can't wait for next month to get an update call our hotline on (02) 879 7455.

**- By Andrew Farrell
Editor and Publisher**



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Boot CD32/CDTV discs on your Amiga

By Mark Cocquio

Now that CD-ROM drives are getting cheap, many Amiga users are taking the plunge and going optical - especially owners of the most advanced Amigas, the AGA machines. This is great! Information and games unlimited at our fingertips! AGA galore! Unfortunately, though, some of the best AGA games are designed for the CD32, and getting them to work on an A1200 or A4000 can be a migraine-inducing experience.

The author of CDBoot decided something had to be done. After all, not everyone with a CD-ROM has a Zappo drive [see the review in the October 1994 issue - Ed].

CDBoot is a nifty little software package that fiddles with your startup sequence and adds a bit which lets you automatically boot a CD32 title.

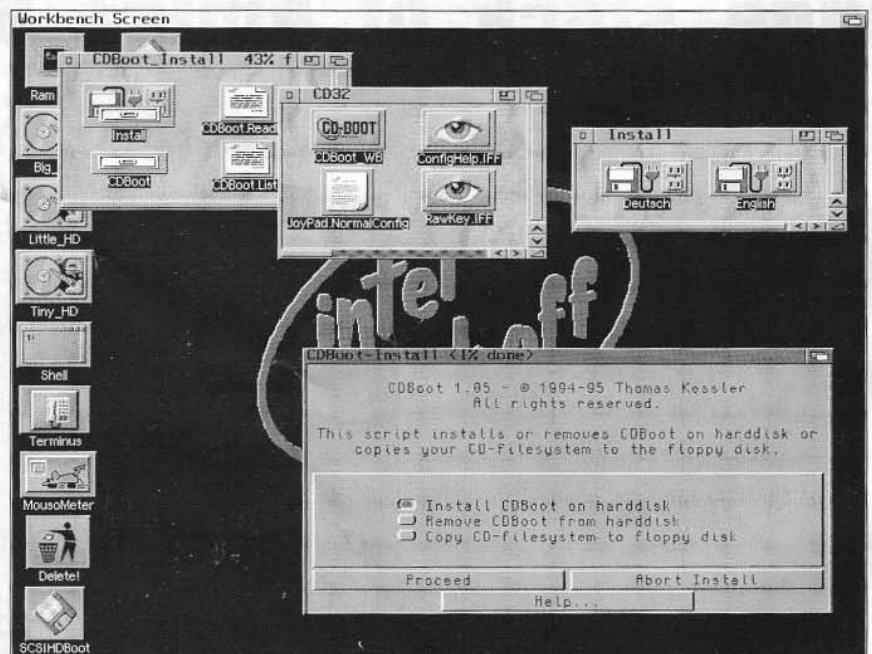
The software needed to do the CDBooting trick isn't that complex, and yes, you probably can set up something similar yourself if you're an Amiga guru. The big reason for you not to do this is that CDBoot does it better and far, FAR more easily. CDBoot also has quite a few bells and whistles, but more about them later.

Setting up

Installation is a breeze. It's all automatically done with Commodore's Installer. You have the choice of installing CDBoot to the boot partition, or removing a previous installation - which makes ex-

pert users rest easier. A third option allows you to create a boot floppy for CDs.

One minor concern is that the installer has no "beginner/intermediate/expert" option; the stuff's going HERE and HERE and that's it.



Installing CDBoot is simplicity itself.

If you're a control freak, though, you can still fiddle the stuff to elsewhere, and there's always the uninstall option.

After installation, everything's set. If you boot with a bootable CD in the drive, a loud sound sample and a really funky requester greet you. You can boot from the CD or just continue normally - CDBoot doesn't do anything annoying like leave a screen or, even worse, a window open to mess up your startup.

Whichever option you pick, it works, and that's probably the nicest thing of all. If you often boot with bootable CDs in the drive but don't often want to boot them, you can set the menu to only come up if you're holding the mouse button down.

Trimmings

Among the various features of CDBoot is the ability to emulate a CD32 control pad with the keyboard and/or joystick. Every button on the CD32 controller can be tied to multiple keys, so for example you can define the red button to be fire on the joystick, key "R" and perhaps the "enter" key if you like.

You can also have a separate set of definitions for each title if you like, which are automatically recognised by CDBoot - but have to be created in a text editor. The process of modifying one config file into another is no great problem for anyone who's not a rank beginner; the config files contain a load of commented out instructions at the top.

CDBoot also comes with a workbench script for starting a CD, which works, but not as often as a straight boot.

CDBoot's manual tells you almost all you need to know. It mentions an appendix listing compatible games that isn't actually there, and there's no reference at all to

**“CDXL
animations
are played far too
slowly and the sound
is garbled.”**

the Akiko chip - the major difference between the CD32 and the rest of the Amiga world.

CDBoot's box proudly boasts that "you can use more than 90% of CD32 games", and this seems right from my tests. The remaining 10% probably use the chunky-to-planar conversion that the Akiko chip performs, and which CDBoot doesn't emulate.

I tested out a few titles, with a high degree of success. Even on my ancient single-speed drive, Zool worked fine, as did a CD32 magazine cover disc. Alien Breed -

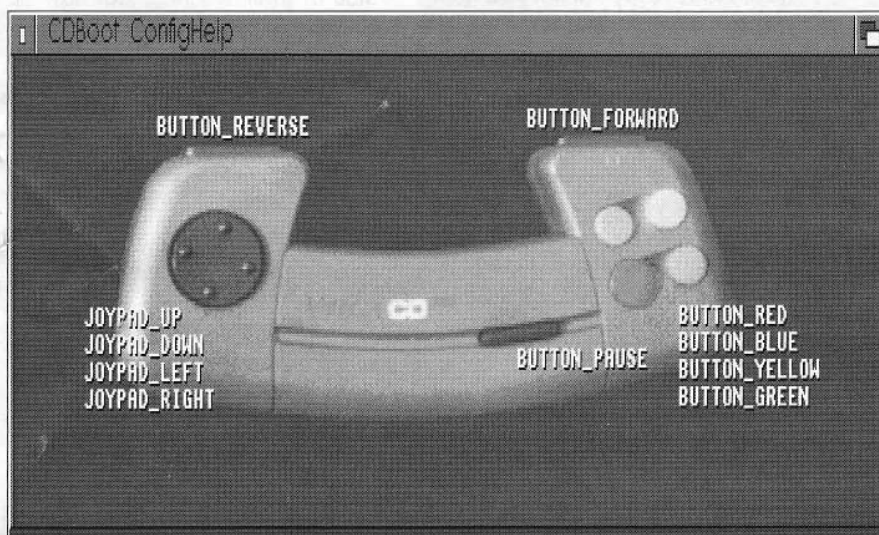
Tower Assault was also coaxed into working after my accelerator was switched off.

The only problem the single-speed drive caused, besides taking twice as long to load, was that CDXL animations are played far too slowly and the sound is garbled because of this. Most people out there have double or better speed drives, so this is not generally a problem.

All in all, CDBoot gets the thumbs up. Its easy to install, has a decent manual, and it actually worked first time, which scores big points. This package is a must for all A1200 and A4000 owners with CD-ROM drives. Owners of other Amigas may also use it for CDTV titles, which it should also support - but this is mentioned in the manual with a big "it might work... or to put it another way, it might not" sort of disclaimer next to it. Check CDTV stuff out in the shop.

Selling for \$69, CDBoot is available from Sigmacom on (02) 524 9846

□



CDBoot lets you emulate all the keys on the CD32 gamepad.



Squirrel SCSI Interface

for your A1200

By Mark Cocquio

► The world of hard drives is divided. On one side, you have IDE, and on the other SCSI. SCSI is certainly the more versatile interface, allowing up to seven devices to be connected to just one controller (as opposed to IDE's two). SCSI is also much more popular with Amiga users; until the IDE-equipped A1200 and A4000 came out, every serious Amiga with a hard drive had SCSI. And sticking a plain SCSI controller into an A4000 is as easy and as cheap as doing it with a 2000.

But what if you own an A1200 or A600? You likely already have an IDE drive, or even two, which means that you can't add any other storage without trading in your drive. It also means you can't easily access all the goodies available on CD-ROM these days; there are plenty of IDE CD-ROM drives, but good luck getting them working from your controller with a hard drive hanging off it too - not to mention the high ugliness factor of dangling a 5.25 inch device outside the case of your console Amiga.

If you have an A1200, you can get yourself a SCSI interface that plugs into the trapdoor expansion

underneath - but what if you already have a non-upgradable expansion board sitting there? There's nowhere else you can fit a SCSI controller... unless...

PCMCIA to the rescue (well, strictly speaking it's now just called PC, but we've memorised that danged acronym and we're going to use the thing)! Yes, that generally empty slot on the left side of your machine can now be put to good use, because the folks at HiSoft have come up with the strangely named Squirrel SCSI interface, which fits neatly into the PC slot, and away you go!

Looks

For a full blown SCSI controller, the Squirrel SCSI is small. Chop a 3.5" disk off where the label ends, and you have the exact area that sticks out of your computer. Our review model was an uninteresting black, as opposed to the white pictures all over the box. But that's a good thing - we all know that black hardware works faster (see April Amiga Review, page 86).

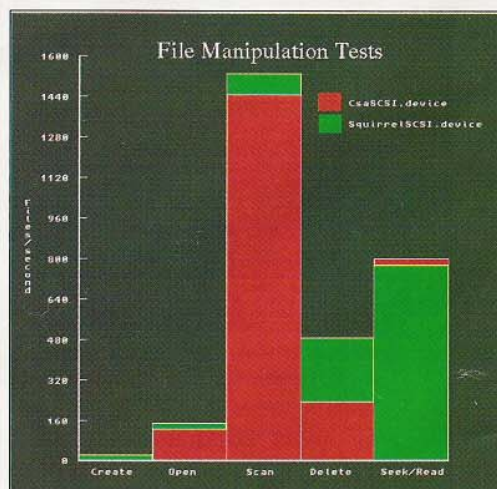
Out of the box protrudes a cable with a standard old-style big 50

way Centronics SCSI plug on it. I can't tell you what the Squirrel looks like inside, because they sealed the box (awwww!), but given its tiny proportions, it'd have to score some Star Trek points.

Software and Setting Up

Setting up the Squirrel is easy with the supplied install disk. It uses the standard Installer, and you can select which parts of the software you want to install. You can make a boot disk for various devices, and install support files too.

There's support for CD-ROM



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drives, and you can create a CD boot disk if you want. If you're using a 1200, there's a CD32 option which gives reasonable compatibility with CD32 autobooting titles. Separate config files and startups for these make this option particularly versatile, but CDBoot is a better option for 1200 owners (see my review in this issue).

Another plus with the Squirrel is that it comes with the registered version of the SCSSIMounter, which makes mounting (and unmounting) SCSI devices simplicity itself. The funkiest feature of the Squirrel controller is its support for "hot plug and unplug", which is a fancy way of saying that you can pull the thing out and pop it back in while the computer's running. This is a feature of PC slot devices, and the Squirrel software handles it perfectly, automatically unmounting and mounting devices when the controller is pulled out and plugged back in again. Try doing this with any other controller and you'll be very, very sorry!

Does it work?

In a word, yes. There is one small hitch, though. Because the PC slot hardware doesn't support autobooting from the Squirrel SCSI, you have to manually mount each SCSI unit or partition.

This is no problem at all if you already have an internal hard drive (as most A1200s do); you can boot as normal from the drive and mount extra devices as you go.

It gets trickier if, like me, you want to boot from a SCSI device. Basically, you have to make a boot disk. The software will do this for you without any fuss, but the problem is that each time you boot you need your boot floppy - it's like going back to the days of Kickstart on disk.

My solution to the problem was to create a recoverable RAM drive (or RAD). Users with lots of RAM

but no hard drive will be familiar with these - they're special bootable RAM disks which survive reboots. With a bit of trimming you can get a manageable boot disk down to 135k.

Booting problems aside, the Squirrel SCSI interface works beautifully. It's fast and transparent; you can treat the PC slot interface just as you would any other hard drive controller. It was quite happy with my clunky old hard drives and CD-ROM, and is VASTLY superior to the horrible (and now defective) SCSI interface in my CSA 12 Gauge accelerator.

Zoom!

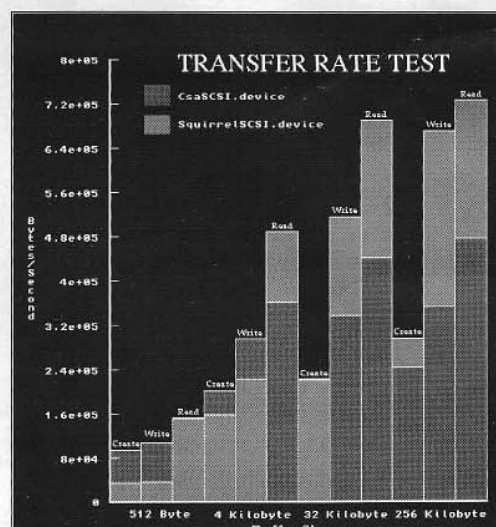
So just how fast is it? The manufacturers boast transfers of 1.2Mb/sec on a standard A1200 and up to 3Mb/sec on a 68030 machine. These numbers are doubtful, as we all know benchmarks can be the worst lies of all.

So I decided to find some lies of my own, with Sysinfo. The transfer rate that Sysinfo produces is one to be taken with many grains of salt. To be fair, you can only really compare it with other Sysinfo readings, and even then only sometimes.

For an unaccelerated (68020-based) A1200, the reported magic number was 908,123 bytes per second. Not bad, considering my old CSA controller could only manage about 800,000 (and that's with an accelerator). This isn't too far off the 1.2Mb/sec figure quoted.

When I repeated the test with my 50MHz 68030 enabled, I was surprised to see that the figure only jumped to 1,071,433 bytes/sec (without fast RAM) or 1,193,371 bytes/sec with fast RAM; nowhere near the quoted 3Mb/sec. Perhaps they were running one of those rare 300MHz 030s...

It should be noted that my old GVP SCSI-RAM board used to get a figure of around 1,800,000 on the



same drive, so the Squirrel's not what you'd call lightning fast, but 1.2Mb/sec is still very respectable.

To get a better idea of the Squirrel's speed, I ran DiskSpeed comparisons between it and my CSA controller, using my fast Quantum hard drive. The results were interesting - as you can see from the graphs. The Squirrel was happier with a larger buffer, whipping the CSA controller on those tests. It also scored much faster on reads, and file operations were generally faster with the Squirrel.

One note, though; the unusually high directory scan figure for both controllers is due to the DirCacheFileSystem of OS3.0.

Overall

At the end of the day, the Squirrel SCSI does look an attractive package. It retails for around \$175, which is certainly cheap considering the PCMCIA technology involved.

Daniel Rutter has clinched the odd review by saying he's so impressed that he'll buy the item in question. Well, it looks as if I'll be doing the same.

Contact Emerald Creative on 1-800-639 273 for more information.



What's new in CD-ROMs

By Daniel Rutter

► Two more new Amiga CD-ROMs recently slapped onto my desk in another of the air mail parcels from those prolific chaps at Schatztruhe in Germany. The first is Aminet CD 5, the fifth of the one disc compilations of software from the titanic Aminet Internet archive, rivalled only by Fred Fish's collection for the title of premier Amiga freely distributable software library. The other disc, *The Beauty Of Chaos Volume 1*, contains more than 500 fractal images.

Aminet 5

The Aminet discs keep coming thick and fast. Aminet 5 is not just a slimmed down version of the mighty four-CD Aminet Set 1 (reviewed last issue in the Hot PD column); it was built considerably after the 18/12/94 snapshot date of the Set, and contains a lot of stuff that's not on Aminet Set 1.

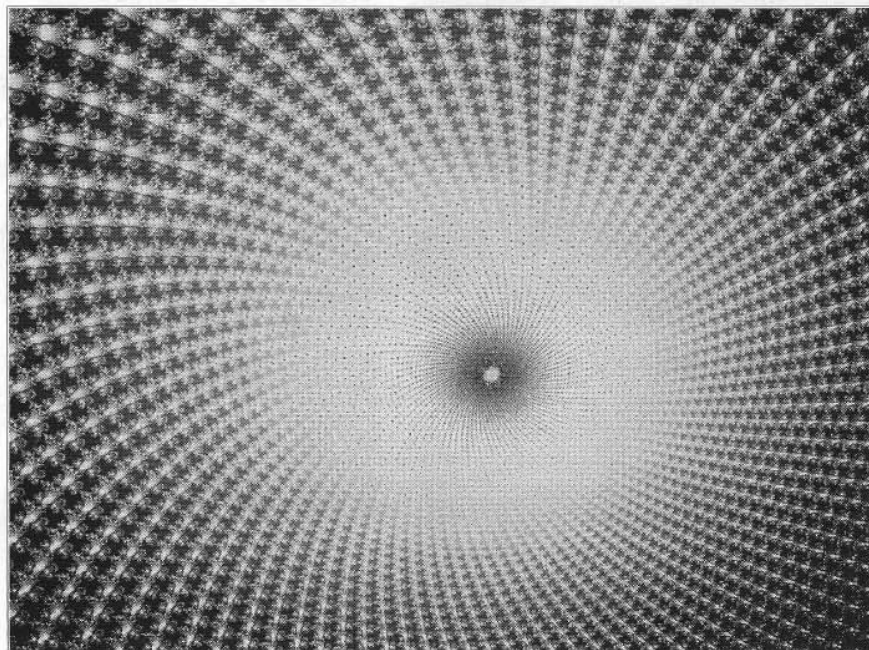
How much stuff? Well, about 214Mb! As always, the new software's in various categories and it's all tied together with beautifully smooth Amigaguide hypertext; click a program's one line description to see the readme file, click the archive name to extract, view

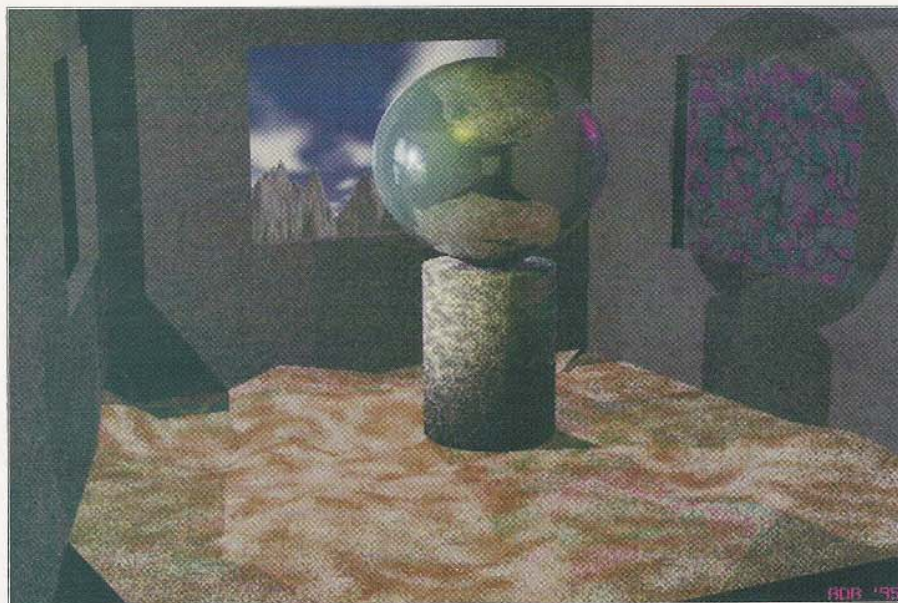
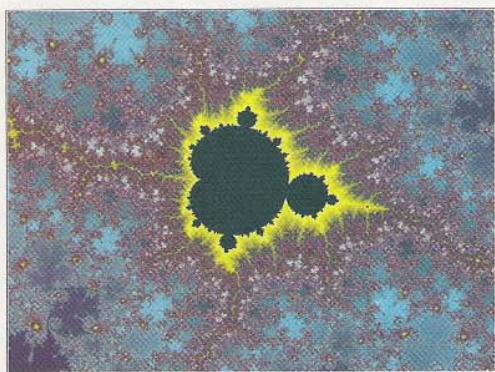
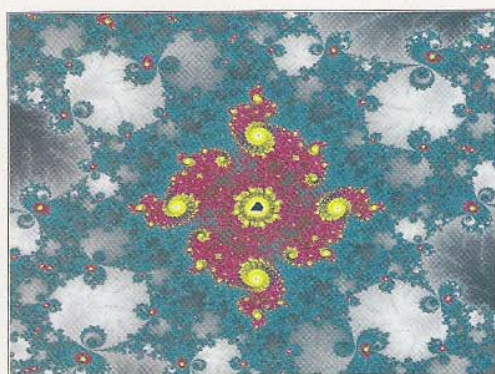
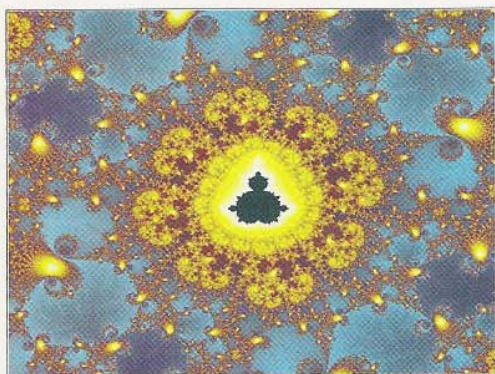
or run it, search the whole disc for any given text at will. If you just want to look at the new stuff since Aminet 4, you can; likewise if you just want the new-new stuff since Set 1. It's a joy to use, and an example to other Amiga CD makers.

As well as the new stuff, you also get the entire Aminet games directory. Every game in the Aminet archive, as of March 1995. This is only about 18Mb (!), but

who's complaining - it's more than 1000 games!

It's not fair to mention the highlights of this disc in an article this size - you'd need to use the whole mag to do it justice. If you want it, it's probably here. But check out my HotPD columns now and in the future - if it's cool, it's likely on Aminet. Using Amiga Review's Internet account, I grab the software before it makes it to





the CDs, but the lead time on the discs is getting pretty short these days so by the time you read the column it's possible you can get the software on CD.

The Aminet discs are very useful, very well put together and reasonably priced. If you've got a CD-ROM equipped Amiga, you should get them.

The Beauty of Chaos

Unlike many picture discs, which Amiga users can access but have to get into "by hand" with serious Shell-bashing, The Beauty Of Chaos is already set up for Amiga, IBM and even Macintosh users.

If you've got an Amiga, it's just a matter of clicking icons to view the 507 GIF images on the disc, after running the Installer-based setup program to tell it what viewer to use. Every fractal has an icon that shows you a thumbnail of the image, and there are also index pictures with reduced versions of all the images.

If that's not enough for you, each GIF comes in 1024 by 768, 1140 by 890, 640 by 480 and 64 by 48 (preview) resolutions, so you

can pick the most appropriate size without having to resort to scaling - which, without a big time image manipulation package, you can't do.

The 20 best images (in the humble opinion of the authors) are also available in TIFF 24 bit format, also in a selection of resolutions. This is not as great an idea as it sounds, because the Amiga isn't exactly overflowing with TIFF viewers. TIFFView (on Aminet 5!) will display them and can save as IFF, but it won't convert into 24 bit IFFs, and the IFFs it does produce seem to be misformatted - I couldn't load them into anything. Fortunately, TIFFView can also save in JFIF (JPG) format, and this seems to work - but for my money you might as well leave the pretty TIFFs alone unless you want them made into posters; TIFF is a popular format amongst professional image manipulators and outputters, but alien to the Amiga.

If you're looking for fractal pictures, check this disc out. Easy to use, full of good pics.

Contact Amadeus on (02) 652 1711. Aminet 5 - \$49, Aminet 1-4 - \$99





Online Survey Results

As part of our campaign to make Amiga Review better fit the needs of you, the readers, we asked the denizens of the Fidonet Aust Amiga conference for their opinions. We're interested in constructive criticisms and suggestions for Amiga Review, from all our readers. What stories and columns should we run? Are we shooting too high or too low? Contact us by post, fax or email with your ideas!

Edited highlights of the most interesting responses in Aust Amiga, and our comments, follow.

User Reports

I would suggest adding a User Report that gives REAL USERS the opportunity to write reviews. It can even be people who contribute for free. ALSO list an Email and FidoNet address ACAR can be directly contacted at!

- Guy Nathan

Ed: We already run reviews by "real users" - indeed, WE'RE real users! Whenever we decide to do a feature on a specialised product, the first people we contact are those with genuine experience in the appropriate area of computing; some of them are regular contributors, some do one-offs. But there's nothing wrong with the concept of peer review - how about we list products coming up for review and ask for comment in Aust Amiga?

Our CompuServe and Internet addresses are our preferred contact methods, but you can Netmail us on Amiga Connection and 500cc

Formula 1 BBSes in Sydney if you're not able to use the faster systems.

Good old stuff

I'd like to see the odd article on some of the more obscure software/hardware/hacks etc that a lot of people have never heard of.

Unfortunately, Amiga Review and other mags are dedicated to providing info on the latest stuff, as this is what generates the advertising.

But I do feel there's room for a column on some of the more "eccentric" things for the Amiga. Basically, just reviews of non-mainstream stuff that has been produced for the Amiga, but we never hear about because there's no advertising-money-push available. And especially if they're inexpensive - there may be some users willing to give it a try.

- Rick Van Ruth

Ed: Obscure stuff can be interesting - the trouble is if we run a story people will want to know where to get it. If we can't answer that, all we create is a lot of frustration. Nevertheless, if there's good old stuff that's still available, we'll certainly consider it.

More Internet and C

I've been reading ACAR for about 2 years now. Sometimes I'm a bit disappointed, sometimes I'm utterly impressed. I usually find the articles are well written and easy to understand.

Something that's really good to see is the increasing amount of information about the Internet - I'm going to get an Internet account soon, but only because the articles in ACAR have explained it better than most of my friends!

I'd really love to see a beginners' assembly language or C programming column, but I realise this may be an impossible wish.

I'd also like to see a beginners' guide to making music with something like Protracker.

I also think it'd be really good to have a column where readers could write about their uses for their Amiga. It would give other users some good ideas about what they can do with their computer. It'd be good to be able to see things like "Fred Bloggs uses his Amiga to control his house alarm" or "Mary Lou has set up her Amiga to automatically make breakfast", with a description of what you need to do whatever it is. I'm sure there are plenty of people with practical, weird or humorous uses for their Amigas out there...

In general, Amiga Review is an excellent mag.

- Paul Marshall

Ed: We like the idea of the reader's uses column, in association with the abovementioned User Report idea. If we run a "Readers uses" column, we could have free subscriptions for the best ideas, and more substantial pieces could go into User Report. If you've got an idea, get in touch with us!

Miracle Publishing

Firstly, no complaints about ACAR whatsoever. It's a miracle you've kept going through all this in the first place.

Whether the whingers like it or not, ACAR has provided as much information as it can in the circumstances, still has more editorial than its overseas counterparts and still carries enough advertising to keep it going.

If I may, I'd like to suggest that when the Amiga sale has been made you have a section in the mag for all those companies that have been "waiting in the wings" for an announcement, so they can tell the world about all the new software they'll be releasing (if reports from Usenet are anything to go by).

I'd also like to see an Australian Developers info section.

- Ivan Smith

Ed: We're looking forward to a flood of new stuff when someone starts making Amigas again, and will of course review it. On the subject of Australian product, we don't believe in discriminating for or against any software based on country of origin - there's no cultural cringe in a country that's produced PC-Task, Directory Opus and Opalvision (hey, while it was Australian everyone liked it!).

More Suggestions

The move away from the games scene was a good one. I think there will always be a place in Amiga Review for games, but reviewing a select few and leaving the cheat code rubbish to the Brit mags was a good idea.

The recent Internet features have been welcome. They actually contain useful info, rather than the hype we've come to expect under this headline.

The reader classifieds is a good idea as well. How about some reviews of the great new techno stuff that is around? A full EMPLANT review ASAP please! (Yes, I know you will as soon as you can.)

I would like details & reviews of things like the new Tower Cases Sigmacom are offering, CD-32 emulators, WARP engine, etc.

Also, some more head-to-head product comparisons. Like putting Opalvision, EGS Spectrum, Picasso II etc up against each other and seeing how they compare.

The idea of a World Wide Web page is cool. How about an ACAR BBS in the meantime, with news, latest reviews and so on. Not everybody has access to the Internet (yet), and with a shell account the WWW just isn't that pretty.

Forget a CompuServe facility. It's far too expensive for the average Amiga user.

The change of style was definitely a good move. ACAR certainly looks more professional now. Keep it up.

- Scott Hillard

Ed: Thanks for the support, Scott. But anybody who suggests that the Amiga Review team start a BBS has obviously not visited our office. We don't have time to pick up our rubbish (well, Daniel doesn't seem to, anyway), let alone run an online service.

Let's face it - there are already a lot of good boards out there, which the comms-hip can already access. We much prefer the idea of using space on somebody else's machine and just setting up a Web site, with all the irritating computer-wrangling done by some poor technician a long way away. In any case, it's not going to happen in the immediate future.

No more C64

How about we finally put the C64/128 to bed and have some more interesting reviews or articles, maybe an Internet on the Amiga each week? Is there anyone with just a C64 who's spending \$5 a month for two pages of info?

I don't believe there are many C64 owners who read the Amiga articles wondering if they should upgrade or not - they've had 10 years to get an Amiga after all.

- James August

Ed: There are still quite a lot of 64s and 128s out there. They're very cheap, there's lots of software, and some people who upgraded still have the old machine - they're not going to be able to sell it for much!

The C64 pages will stay until such time as there really is nothing happening in the 64 scene - but the world's most popular single computer model, full stop, is still refusing to die! (Hey, there's no column in this issue! - DR)

TV, dodgy article

Chris Pappas of Engadine, NSW, watched Channel 10's "Healthy, Wealthy and Wise" and saw a segment on making high school easier. A student was typing an assignment on Kindwords. Chris also saw a 1084 in the premiere of "Feds" on 9, and he included a copy of an article from "Australian Markets and Fairs", which made up in enthusiasm what it lacked in accuracy (we never knew IMB made computers!).

More subscription sucking

Jason Harvey of Noarlunga Sth, SA, spotted a 1200 in an ad for the Today Tonight program. Then, when watching TVED on SBS, he saw many Amigas being used in foreign schools. He went on to mention spottings in his bedroom and in this mag, pointed out that he's the twin brother of Tracey Harvey, another Amiga spotter, and then performed "the grovel dance" for a free subscription.

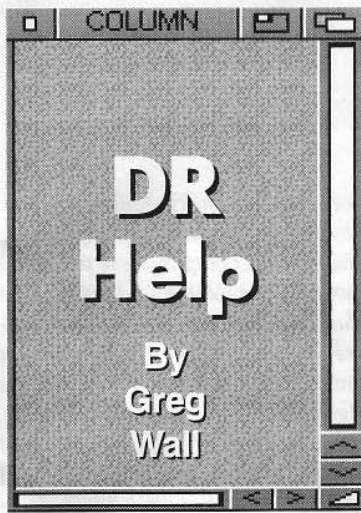
We were impressed by the Amiga Review sighting - nobody's done one of those before. If you'd included a clipping, Jason, you would have won. But you didn't.

Tasteful fiction & musician

Daniel Everton of Sunshine Beach, Qld, was reading Stephen King's "The Tommyknockers", which features a Commodore computer being used to control a dimensional portal.

Mr Everton also included another of those lovely photocopies, this time from Omni, which mentioned "a fully tricked-out \$10,000 A4000 based Video Toaster", part of a funky video system used to bring sides of Billy Idol to a Tonight Show audience which they likely had no great desire to see.

Mr Everton neglected to ask for a free sub. So we're giving him one. ■



Buster botheration

Dear Helpline: I own an Amiga 3000 with a socketed Super Buster Chip that has been labelled with the following:

CSG
390539-07
71-SUPER BUSTER
C M CBM 1989,90
2292 51013G

I've heard about a lot of problems with the Buster chip, and the need to upgrade it to rev 1.1. What does the Buster chip actually do, and do I have to change mine? If so, where can I get the replacement chips?

K. Yap, Nth Melbourne, VIC

Dr Help: The Super Buster chip looks after the Zorro bus. The later version should be replaced has the code 390539-11 in place of -07. The older version (which you have) has some problems with Zorro III cards.

The symptoms are usually that the system locks up, crashes or maybe doesn't start up at all. If your system runs fine and you don't need to add any Zorro III cards to it, all should be OK. If you

do need to upgrade, though, you'll find that new Busters are scarce as hens' teeth. I have help for you though - contact Sibnet Electronics on (02) 417 7600. They tell me they can get their hands on some, for about \$70.

RAM hunting

Dear Helpline: I have an Amiga 3000 with 14Mb of static column RAM (2Mb chip, 12 Mb fast). I dabble a bit in graphics and 3D rendering with Imagine and find my current setup inadequate. Using models of an average size of about 300k, with brush maps, background pictures and global brushes, I find that to render a decent sized image, 1024x768 pixels, I run very short of memory.

To render larger or more complex images I need more memory, but my problem is that static column RAM is almost impossible to find and any other solutions are quite expensive. A Fastlane Z3 costs the same as 16Mb of SIMMs, and I'd rather spend a grand on memory than a board to plug it into. I could go all out for a Warp Engine accelerator, but I'd still have to shell out for RAM. Is there a high capacity memory solution that allows all my memory to be seen as a contiguous block, or should I sell my current memory and go for an accelerator with its own memory?

T. Polmear, Gladesville, NSW

Dr Help: If you have or know anyone who has a modem, get a message out on whatever online services you can to track SC

RAM down. If any of our readers have any static column RAM for sale drop us a line marked ATTN: Helpline.

The best way around the problem would be with the Warp Engine accelerator with RAM, the fastest if you can afford it. The good side of this is that you shouldn't have any problems getting rid of the RAM you have!

It probably goes without saying that you need every byte of your hard drive for your rendered images, but have you considered purchasing a virtual memory program as a workaround solution? These use a section of your hard drive as virtual memory. It's not anywhere near as fast as real memory, but allows you to create larger images without spending thousands of dollars. Gigamem, for example, retails for around \$149 and is available from Amadeus Computers on (02) 651 1711.

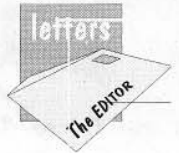
Fixing disks

Dear Helpline: I have many disks that have read/write errors. This is very annoying, so could you please tell me how to use DiskDoctor to correct them?

Robert Smart - address unknown

Dr Help: To begin with, the errors may be due to several things. I don't want to cause a panic, but you may want to run a virus checker over the disks you're having problems with. Then again, the disks may just be getting old; all things wear out over time.

A virus can totally ruin a disk by corrupting the information on



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it. Disks can also develop problems if something nasty happens, like a system crash in the middle of a write or something physically wrong with a sector or track on the disk.

Don't use DiskDoctor; get hold of a program such as Fixdisk or Disksalv, both freely distributable and available from either us (Wall Street Video), Prime Artifax or Megadisc. These come with full instructions. They'll save as much as they can, but the the disk may still be unusable.

After answers

Dear Helpline: I recently added a Zappo CD-Rom drive to my A1200 system, which at first refused to work because it wasn't compatible with Disk Expander, which I now have to load manually every time I switch on the Amiga. I'm sure this can be fixed quite easily by an expert.

Another problem I have relates to the Aminet 5 disc, which I bought after reading in Daniel Rutter's HotPD column that "You can point and click your way around most of the archive, with pictures viewing without you lifting an finger, sound MODs playing automatically, demos and games running from the archive (but giving you the option to extract them to a directory instead), and so on. And high speed searching. All you need is Amigaguide and it all comes together."

Well, maybe I'm thick, but I can't access any of the archives that easily. Stuff in lha archives I extract to RAM using a utility

called GUIARC, and it mostly works. DMS archives require typing into a requester, transferring to a floppy, and sometimes rebooting from the floppy before the program will work.

Other programs require "Installer". Programs like "Klondike", which I would dearly like to use, are a total enigma to me.

How do you use AmigaGuide? I know I've got it, but I keep getting a message that a particular program needs it before it will run.
Paul England, Kianga NSW

Dr Help: I've got some idea about what's going on with your Disk Expander problem. Disk Expander compresses files. If the Disk Expander program's not running, the compressed data isn't intelligible. The Zappo software's probably looking at something that's compressed before Disk Expander runs, which it'd have to do to boot from CDs. If you can make sure the files the Zappo's using aren't compressed, you should be able to go back to your original configuration.

Your Aminet problem, though, has me baffled. I'm not sure how you've managed not to find this disc as easy to use as falling off a log. Open the disc icon. Double click the INDEX icon, or the FIND one, or the README one (click the PREFS one first if you want to tweak the disc's default settings - set the default extract directory to wherever you want). Click on things which interest you.

The Amigaguide program is on the disc, and you need do nothing

to make it work for Aminet access. The program that's complaining about it not being there is probably looking for Amigaguide in the standard location (the utilities directory on your boot disc) and not finding it. Make sure it's in the right place.

Installer is another standard Workbench program you should already have on your hard drive (it's certainly on your original AmigaDOS floppies), but you don't need it for the bulk of the stuff on the disc.

If something does need it, it should run from the install icon without any great effort. DMS and LhA are both on the Aminet disc, and both fire up automatically when you click the appropriate archive's name. DMS does extract to floppy disks - its full name is Diskmasher, it's an archiver specially designed to compress whole disks to a file, and it's generally used for non-DOS disks that can't be archived any other way, but the Aminet interface doesn't make you type into a requester - you just click the archive and stick in a disk.

There are a few dud files on Aminet 5, but well over 99% of the disc is painless to access. This doesn't mean the setup procedures for everything on the disc are just as painless, but in most cases they are.

I hope you find this enlightening. □



IBM or Apple Mac as well! No Problem

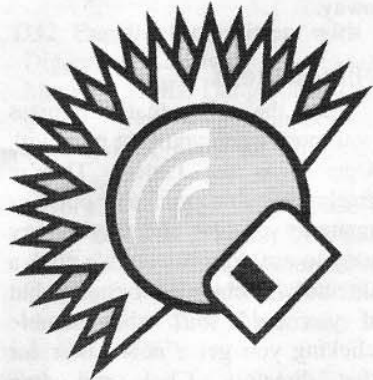
Did you know that we now provide Training for IBM and Compatible computers as well? Same great service, same number, different name. 22 Consultants, Entire Sydney Metro.

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Directory Opus 5

The best file manager ever?



By Daniel Rutter

Time was when we knew what a directory utility looked like. Two directory list windows and a pile of buttons. Sure, there were a few free-form oddities like Browser and MegaD, but it seems people like to have a nice steady interface.

The big (in every sense) gun for years in Amiga directory utilities has been Jon Potter's Directory Opus - it is, historically, the only successful commercial one. Behind Opus were a squad of freely distributable relatives, led by Chris Hames' DirWork, another Australian product which has now also gone commercial with version 2.

Dirwork 2 introduced a new concept - a semi-fixed interface. You can tinker with it to your heart's content, shuffling components around, making new buttons and defining your own functions. It's very powerful.

Unfortunately, Dirwork 2 is also about as user-friendly as a seatless bicycle. If making 64 buttons one at a time, and sizing and positioning them with the keyboard, is your idea of fun then I suggest you turn yourself in before one of those nasty police siege situations develops.

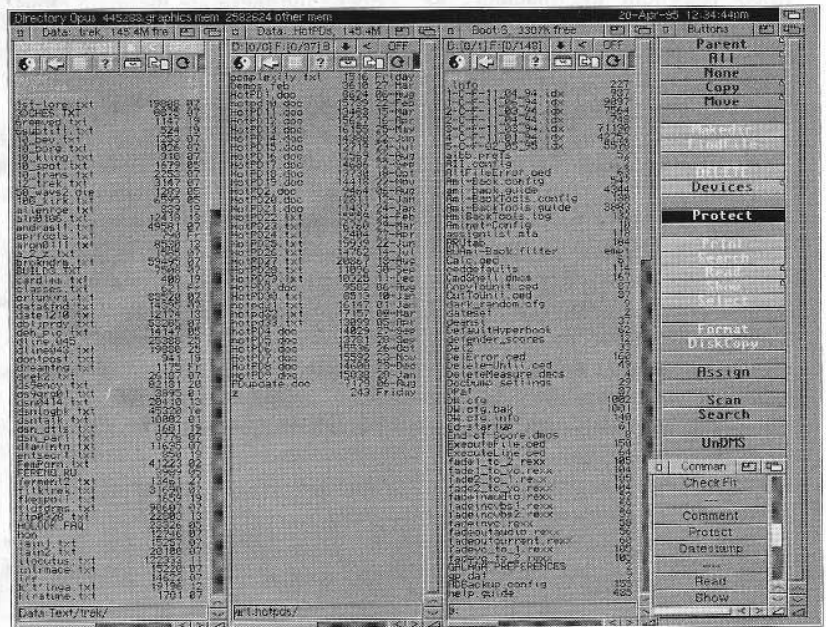
If you want to change things globally, it's as simple as doing a

search and replace in the configuration file for "A,p",z'v464F524D m8v414E494D',t'FORM ????'AN-IM' @0,s1". Stuff that for a game of soldiers. So I was rather excited by the hype surrounding the release of Directory Opus 5. It promised great flexibility, easy re-configuration, a whole new way to use your computer and a chicken

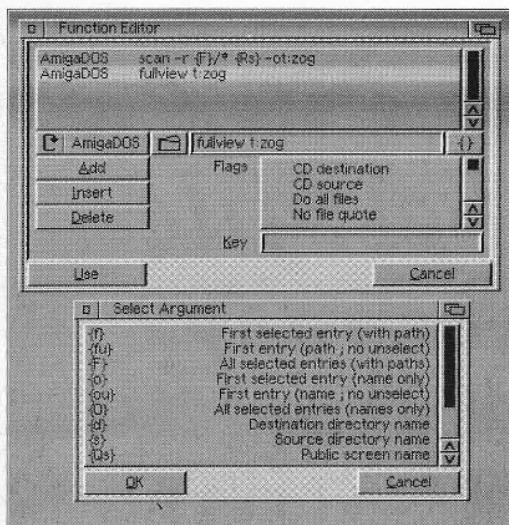
in every pot. I've been a DirWork fan since the days when fitting my system on floppies mattered to me, but I'm no fanatic. It took a while, but I've got a copy of Opus 5 now, and, generally, I'm impressed.

Setting up

Opus 5 comes on one disk. Installation is simple, although the



This is one way Opus 5 can look. There are about a billion other ways it can look, too.



**Setting up actions is as easy
as it can be.**

19 character serial number makes sure you're awake. The registration process "locks" Opus to the drive you install it on; if you optimise the drive or move Opus to a different drive you need to reregister it the next time you run it. You can set Opus 5 up to not start up when you boot the machine, to start up iconified, to start up full screen or even to completely replace Workbench - a special Load-Wb program runs Opus instead of Workbench, unless you hold down shift while booting.

Look and feel

This would be a good point to explain the basic design of Opus 5. It's all built on the Main Window, which has icons for all your devices, program groups and left out icons. The devices work the same as in Workbench, except clicking on them opens a lister window. The listers can display icons if you ask, but they're much more powerful if you just use the plain text list.

Program groups are rather like their identically named cousins in Windows, except a bit better

thought out. You make a new group, give it a name, and drag into it whatever you want. The programs stay right where they are - they just have linked icons that run them when clicked. It's a handy way to get related programs together without physically moving them around, but it's got one of the annoying problems the Windows version suffers from - if you delete or move a program in a group, the group doesn't automatically update. At least Opus fails to run the program silently, and doesn't pop up an irritating requester.

Left out icons work the same way they do in Workbench, except they're always still visible in their original location as well.

Opus 5's Main Window can of course use any screenmode you like and can open on the Workbench screen, removing all the standard Workbench stuff, if you like (this saves some chip RAM but means you have to hide Opus if you should want to use Workbench). And the Main Window is where the Listers and button banks open, and these are the main Opus 5 tools.

Button banks work not unlike buttons in Opus 4, except they're now free-form - you can have as many buttons as you like by as many as you like.

Listers are windows with a file list and optional little action buttons, which I found too small and fiddly on a high res screen. Graphic buttons can be any size up to 64 by 64 pixels, and the images in them can be standard icons or IFFs. Making a bar of dock icons is thus very simple.

All buttons, graphic or text, are about as easy to set up as you could hope. The editor lets you define what internal command, Workbench or Shell program or ARexx script (Opus 5 has a complete ARexx interface) to tie to the button, and you don't have to re-

member all those arcane bracketed letters you need to put filenames and such into a command string - there's a menu of them a click away.

Nifty Listers

But the thing that'll impress you most when you first play with Opus 5 is the Listers. They're freely resizable, you can open as many as you like, and they're very easy to use. You can double click a directory to enter it, of course; but if you hold shift while double clicking you get a new Lister for that directory. Click and drag things to copy them or extract archives - and it's fine to grab a mixed bag of files, directories and archives; the files and dirs get copied, the archives get extracted.

It gets better. Click and drag a directory into a lister and hold shift as you let the dir go, and the contents of the dir appear in the lister you dragged it to.

The old click the edge to go to the parent feature still exists, but now you have to click the narrow left edge of a window, not very easy unless the window's up against the edge of the screen.

Managing sources and destinations is of necessity more complex when you've got more than two Listers open. By default, the Lister you just clicked in is the source and the one you selected last is the destination, but you can also lock Listers into source or destination mode so you can have multiple sources and multiple destinations. If you've got, say, two sources and two destinations, and you select three files in one source and four in the other and hit copy, all seven files will be copied to each destination. This feature was pinched from the PD dirutil MegaD, and works very well indeed.

You can also control Listers with the keyboard - just hit space to enter keyboard mode and start

cursoring around as well as using the mouse. This can be handy for fiddly file selection, and should also make users of clumsy MS-DOS dirutils feel at home.

Hey guys - multitasking!

One of the best features of Opus 5 is its asynchronous behaviour. If you start a disk formatting, you can move the format menu away and keep working. Started a long copy operation? Switch to a new Lister, or open another one, and keep going. You can make all sorts of operations asynchronous, which shifts the main focus of annoyance while using Opus from waiting-for-the-copy-to-finish to waiting-for-the-lister-to-redraw. Hey, I'm never satisfied.

Asynchronicity extends to the config editors, too. You can't use a button bank while you're editing it, but you can use a file lister while editing buttons. You don't have to shut down and reopen nine prefs windows if you find you need to do some piddling file management task while you're changing as format option. Brilliant.

Easy identification

Opus 5's file matching features are quite good. File matching is what lets Opus recognise given sorts of files and run the right program to view them, play them, extract them or whatever.

If you've got OS3 or better, Opus can use Datatypes, which makes recognition simpler. But if you haven't you'll have to do a bit of roll-your-own work; Opus comes with a pile of file recognisers so at least you don't have to make them yourself, but in many cases you'll have to set up the right action strings yourself. If you're already an Opus 4 user you can convert your old config, but if you're new to the program you'll find yourself doing a fair bit of spadework to get the program up

and running. The nicest way to do file matching would be to have an option that let you select a whole load of files of format X and have the program figure out what they had in common, but nobody's done that yet - if you want to build a recogniser for some oddball format not included in the package you'll have to look at the files and see what sort of ID string they've got, and at what offset in the file; it's then quite easy to make a file type for them.

Once it's set up, Opus 5 makes system management much easier, but setting it up can require a fair bit of knowledge. No doubt piles of Opus configs will soon be circulating in the public domain.

Stability problems

The first thing that happened when I ran Opus 5 was a crash. After a laborious search through the many system-enhancing utilities I run, I discovered that FBL, FasterBlit, was the program it had a problem with. I gave it the flick. I've still got about 40% worth of 1% speed boosters anyway, so it's no great loss.

However, I've found that Opus 5 on my machine isn't very stable in normal use. If I leave the Opus screen up and go away for half an hour, there's an excellent chance I'll come back to a guru box. There are also miscellaneous failures while I use Opus, none of which seem to be distinctly linked to any particular event, but it never crashes if I leave it iconified. I've been assured that Opus is very stable on every other computer it's been tried on, and I'm glumly willing to believe it; my Amiga's old and encrusted with weird software and prone to rebooting itself now and then anyway. If you're not running an A500 with a bolt through its neck, you ought to be right.

One other minor problem I encountered had to do with palette

setting. A late addition to the program, mentioned in the accompanying readme file but not in the manual, is the GrabWB option, which lets you grab your Workbench palette for use in Opus. This only grabbed the first four colours on my WB2.1 ECS machine, which left me adjusting the colours manually. Not that it really mattered, because for speed on my old machine I quickly dropped back to an ugly but functional four colour screen.

There's also only one ARexx script presently included - it's a rather nice number for extracting DMS archives that opens a new Lister for the disk you're extracting to and has a graphical progress display. More scripts are promised in the near future, and will be distributed via "public sources" - bulletin boards, Internet, Aminet and so on. There's also supposed to be an Opus 5 Internet site in the pipeline.

Overall

Directory Opus 5 is well written, easy to use and enormously powerful. There are still a few rough edges in the packaging and the manual's not as well laid out as it could be - though the information's great, and there's online help too - but the combination of power and flexibility beats absolutely any file manager every written for any computer. This is a class act. Get it.

Directory Opus sells in the US for \$US129 - but us lucky Australians get it for the same number of our dollars, thanks to the absence of shipping costs. Upgrades from any previous version of Opus are \$68 including postage and packing - just send your original Opus disk with your money.

Contact Small-Biz Software on (074) 919 190.

□

PC-Task 3.1

the best gets better

By Daniel Rutter

► In the February Amiga Review I checked out the latest version of PC-Task, the Amiga's premier software PC emulator. That was version 3.00, a large improvement over previous incarnations of the software.

Well, now there's been a further update, to v3.10. PC-Task's still basically the same, but there are a few new features and quite a lot of fixed bugs.

What's new?

One big change in the new version is the Advanced Video Options feature. This lets you select which screenmode each PC Video Mode will open on, when a DOS program running under PC-Task opens that mode. This means you can define what sort of Amiga screen - or even window - will be opened for each mode a PC program asks for.

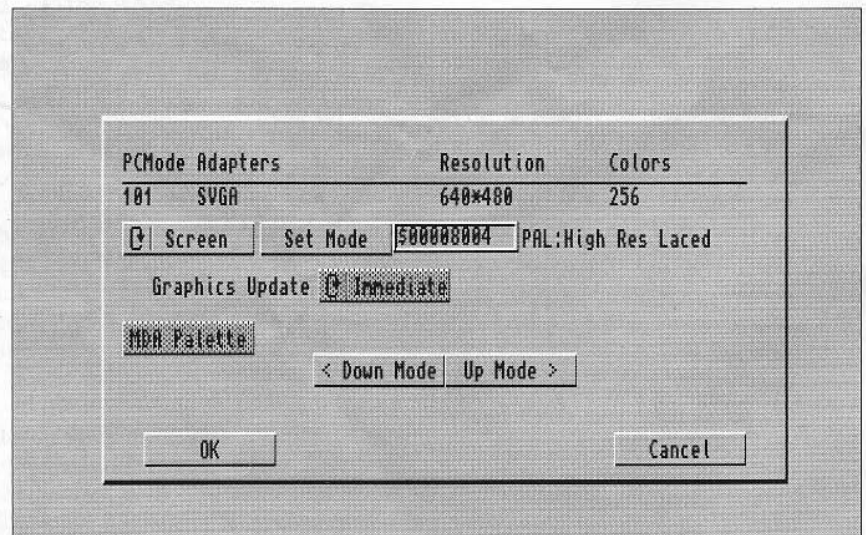
Graphics card users are catered for in the readme file that comes with the update. You can use the Advanced Video Options to bounce otherwise undisplayable PC graphics modes into graphic board screenmodes for 256 colours on ECS Amigas (the makers rec-

ommend you upgrade to Workbench 3.1 for greater stability).

If you've got a graphics board supported by the Cybergraphics high speed workbench emulation system, you'll be pleased to know PC-Task will work with it, and will enjoy the graphics speed benefits in VGA and SVGA modes. Presently, this applies to PicassoII, GVP Spectrum and Piccolo Zorro

2 or 3 owners, but the Cybergraphics system is set up so that the libraries work with any board a driver's been written for, so extra compatibility is definitely in the pipeline.

Still on the subject of graphics, you can now use the Windows Video 7 drivers to use 256 colour screens in Windows (the standard Windows 256 colour SVGA



The new Advanced Video Options features let you set your graphics up just the way you want.



drivers don't work). This still needs work, though; you won't be able to see the mouse cursor if you're using these modes!

Other changes

You can now make hard disk files for PC-Task up to 255Mb in size, against the old 63Mb. Remember, though, that the larger the disk file, the slower it works, so only make the file as big as you need.

One thing that I must confess I didn't miss at all in PC-Task 3.00 was that the PC speaker sound didn't work. Hey, it might have been cool in 1980 but really, kids, nobody wants to hear those buzzes and squawks today. Well, it does now. Whoopee. Hold the front page.

Faster or slower?

One thing about the new version which startled me somewhat is that according to WinBench, it's

running some 10% slower. I was dubious about this reading, so ran a few other benchmarks, including some which had reported stupid figures on the last version. They couldn't decide how fast the emulation was; some said faster, some said slower. This reinforced my low opinion of emulation benchmarks; they keep looking for hardware reference points that aren't what they're meant to be and getting awfully confused. Basically, it's all splitting hairs, since PC-Task's still very sluggish overall. There certainly wasn't a noticeable difference.

Shock! Horror!

Emulated Windows users will be shattered to learn that serial doesn't work under Windows. I confess that I couldn't stand the pain of checking this; the pretend-serial mouse driver works fine, but if you want to do Windows comms with PC-Task you're not going to manage it. Of course, if you want

to do Windows comms with PC-Task you should be wrapped in a wet blanket and put in a cellar for a few weeks anyway.

Overall

There are quite a few fixed bugs and other minor changes in PC-Task 3.1, on top of the bigger ones listed above. Considering the nominal fee to upgrade, this is a patch well worth getting, and it makes PC-Task an even more attractive prospect for those that don't have it yet. As I said three months ago - this is definitely the most PC you're going to get for \$129!

The PC-Task 3.1 update is available free from Galaxy BBS on (03) 584 8590; it's also on Aminet. If you're modemless, you can get it for \$5 from Emerald Creative on (03) 585 2055, or dealers.

□

Pups 2
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Births

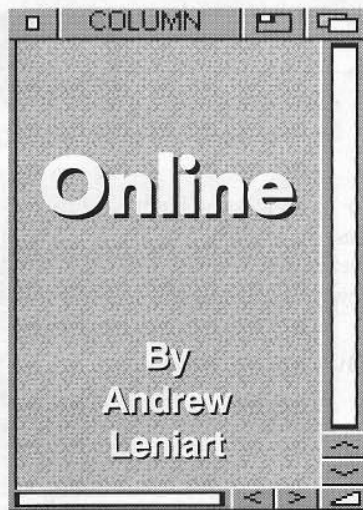
Congratulations to Jonathan and Greg. From Australian Amiga users. After nine months of intensive labour, Baby Opus was delivered on Monday! That's No. 5!

- Important -

If you want to take a look at the new Opus 5, please bring \$129.00 RRP to your local dealer. If you're considering upgrading, call Small-Biz Software on (074) 919 190.

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Phone:+61 (0) 74 919190 Fax:+61 (0) 74 926860





World Wide Web - the ultimate experience?

Surfing the graphical world of the World Wide Web has been acclaimed by many to be the ultimate InterNet experience. But is it? I don't think so, and here's why.

WWW - My First Experiences

I decided to wander away from the Unix shell environment at my Internet provider and upgrade my connection to a TCP/IP type interface. Like many, I'd heard of the benefits of being able to surf the net with one's mouse and wanted in on the action.

Well, I got in all right, but once the novelty of the pretty graphics wore off (this took about two or three hours for me), I was left wondering what all the fuss was about.

I'll admit that the TCP/IP experience I'm about to share was not with Amiga TCP software. I haven't gotten around to trying AmiTCP myself yet, but instead used an IBM clone package called Chameleon Sampler and NetScape for the exercise.

First Impressions

My first impression of the World Wide Web via a TCP/IP connection could be described as WOW - but that excited feeling soon mellowed to a bit of a sigh.

It's just so damn slow, even

with a 14400 Bps modem connection to my provider - and no, my provider does not go through the congested APANA link. They have their own commercial link to the Internet, and it's still painfully slow when using World Wide Web.

Everything you see on the Web is physically downloaded via the modem to your machine, and the software you're using then presents it to you on your monitor. Sure, most of it looks great, but is it worth the hassle of sitting there waiting for it all to come? I didn't think so. Well, not without a 28.8k modem anyway.

My surfing experience

I started off by exploring my own provider's web pages. Home on the Internet for me is:

<http://www.netspace.net.au/>

Everything looked fairly ho-hum and reasonably familiar, with many of the functions I was used to using via the Unix shell now accessible by clicking on a pretty box or underlined bit of text. Big deal.

Anyway, I eventually found an index which lists many Australian WWW sites. I found this index very useful - it saves many hours of blind stumbling around the Web trying to find a site which offers something you're interested in. Try it out yourself by surfing over to:

<http://www.softcom.com.au/WW-W.AU/index.html>

Australian WWW sites are generally much quicker to access than any overseas sites. The sites are indexed by subject, and there should be something there to interest everyone.

To give you an idea of what

you can find, categories include Architecture, Arts, Astronomy, Chemistry, General Research, Computer Science, General Education, Engineering, Environment related, Government sites, Media sites, Medical, Movies, Music: get the idea?

You can spend hours and hours just visiting these sites and seeing what they have on offer, most of it being text based articles and studies on various issues. I decided to whip over to the Media section and check out THE AGE, a Victorian newspaper's page, where I was able to read and download articles of interest that appeared in the last few issues of the popular paper.

A service like this is great if you want to find an article in a past issue which you forgot to save - but apart from that, it's far easier to just buy the newspaper or magazine and read it the regular way. This rings true with much of the information available on the super-highway - doing searches is great, but for a leisurely read give me paper any day.

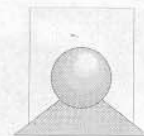
Finding your way around the world

The manufacturers of the software I was using have a site with an index of World Wide Web sites all over the world. You can check it out yourself by cyberspacing over to

<http://home.mcom.com/home/inter-net-search.html>

I also found a much easier way of finding interesting places to visit. Leech off the time that other experienced WWW users have spent instead. Allow me to explain.

Continued on page 50 ...



Essence and Forge

By Jarrod Pudsey



It's 1 a.m. and that image is still looking decidedly drab. The spaceships are an unthreatening shade of blue, that planet looks like a smooth grey sphere, and lets not even mention the trans-dimensional vortex in the corner.

Been here before? Apex attempts to solve this problem with volume two of Essence, a library of textures from organic to man made. In short, if you create com-

puter graphics you need Essence. Readers familiar with the 3D program Imagine will already understand how Essence works. Textures most commonly refer to pictures or bitmap images projected onto or around an object.

Essence contains a directory of algorithmic or procedural textures instead of actual pictures. Each one has different parameters controlling its appearance and therefore

can be altered to create a slight or completely new image.

Originally these textures were designed to be used with Imagine and to supplement its existing library of procedural textures. Most 3D programs come with built in procedural texture capabilities.

They offer a wider range of possibilities than with just one bitmap image as well as being much more memory efficient. In most cases they are just an extension of the other available surface attributes like reflectivity and transparency. How then can these textures be accessed by other 3D programs?

Unfortunately for non-Imagine users, they have to be rendered into a bitmap image and projected onto the objects. This is where Forge comes into action.

Forge is designed as a preview editor for these algorithmic textures. As in Imagine, their parameters can be altered and adjusted to change their appearance. Once your new texture is created it can then be saved as an attribute. To use this attribute, just set it to render and in a few seconds or minutes, depending on the image format selected, you have an image ready to load into your 2D paint or

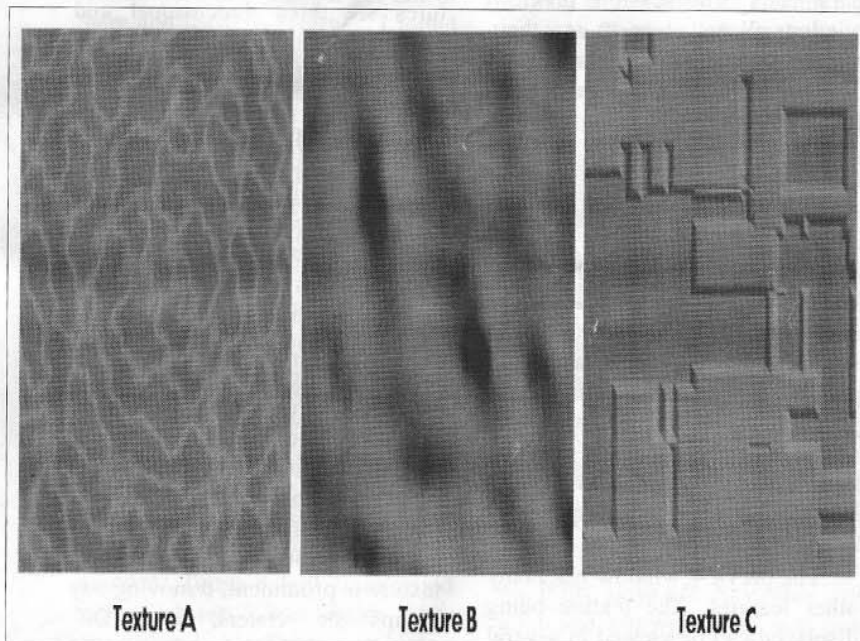
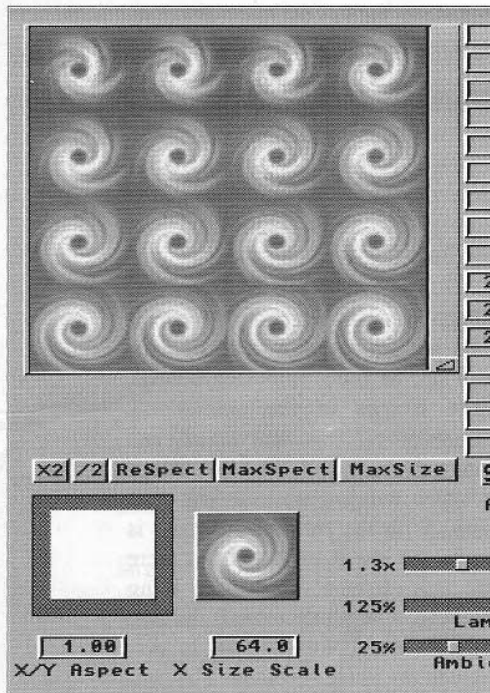
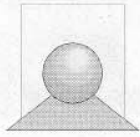


Fig 1.



justable frame rates. Because the animation storyboards are displayed in the preview window, adjusting the parameters will cause the image to begin redrawing into finer detail and the animation to be updated likewise. The result is an animation that can be altered on the fly.

Conclusion

As I said at the beginning, if you're into 3D computer graphics then you should have Forge and Essence at hand. They provide a very wide range of texture capabilities and at less expense to your hard drive space than a large collection of bitmap images. Volume I of Essence is also available to make the choice of texture that much more interesting. Be warned however, as I'm not sure if this tool actually increases productivity. You may find yourself spending the remaining hours of the night playing with all the neat buttons and watching the pretty colours appearing before your eyes.

□

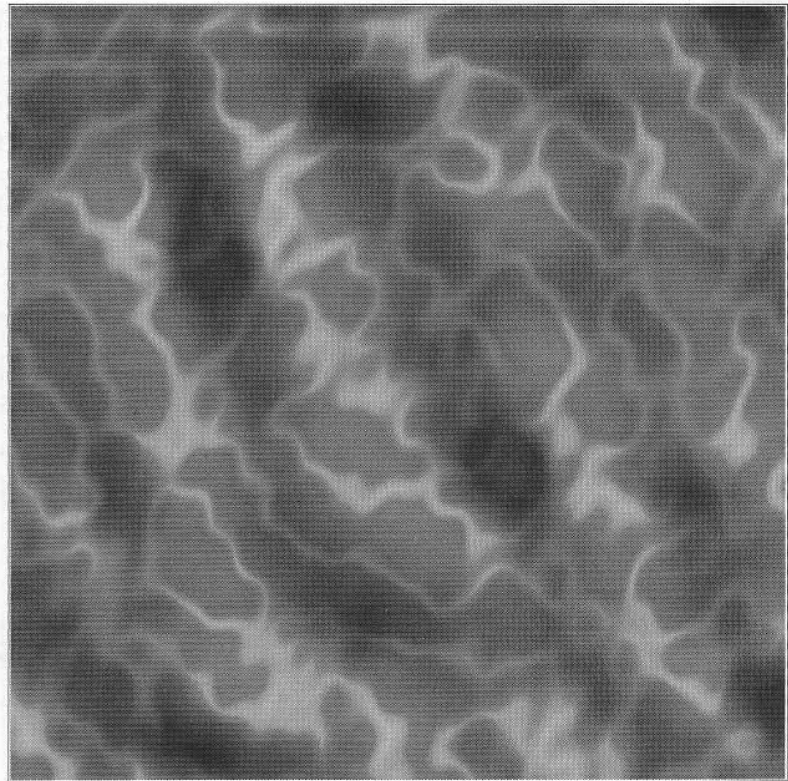


Fig 2.

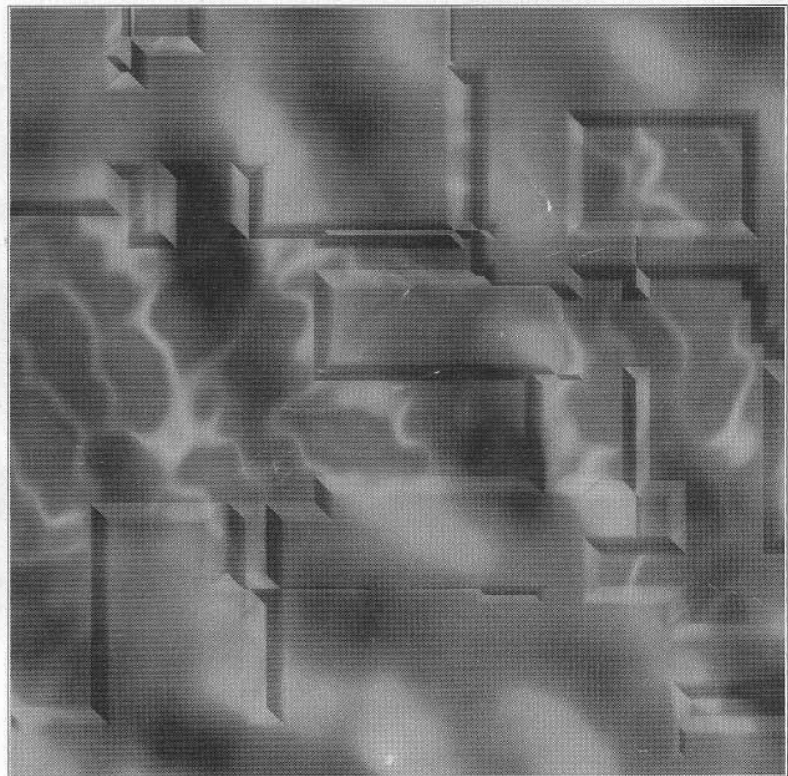






Fig 3.

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3D program. Sounds simple doesn't it? Well, the good folks at Apex have made it a bit more fun than that. When using Forge, the word "myriad" keeps springing to mind.

Essence comes with over 40 base textures to work with and alter, and from these about 160 example attributes have been created and included with the program. With all those parameters, something tells me that there are a lot of textures to be made.

System Requirements

To use Forge as a front end for the Essence textures a 68020 CPU equipped Amiga or above with at least a 2.04 ROM is required. You also need 68881 or 68882 FPU.

A set of optimised textures is included for those with an '040 Amiga. The speed of the textures overall have been improved for faster rendering on all compatible Amigas.

Interface

The Forge layout consists of a preview window and a column of parameters. The scalable preview window allows users to see their texture update as the parameters are adjusted. The image is refreshed first in a low "chunky" display and then constantly updated in higher resolutions until the final detailed texture is visible. This is an ideal way of achieving a real time preview, as you can usually see the benefits of their alteration in the first pass. Things such as the size of a textures tiles, a ripples pattern, or the colour can be adjusted with ease in this way. It's much more intuitive and creative than moving a slider and waiting one minute while the computer redraws the picture.

The preview window has many other features. The texture being displayed can be viewed in several different ways. The default view is

a sphere shape with the texture wrapped around it. This is mainly used just as a preview image of the texture. The way the preview looks is how the image will look when rendered, so some more useful views are available.

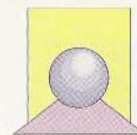
Of course there's the standard flat view in either the top, front, or side direction. This is because most of the textures are three dimensional. The default is looking from above, like onto a box or cube, so viewing from the front or side will yield a different display of the same texture.

A spherical or cylindrical view will distort the texture so when it's imported into a 3D program and wrapped around an object, it will join up seamlessly and appear correctly aligned and unwarped. Pretty neat huh?

Repetition map also creates seamless images, but in a planar view for tiling textures. This technique is usually not as effective as creating a large image map, as tiling is sometimes obvious in organic surfaces, but it does greatly reduce memory consumption.

As mentioned before, the textures are three dimensional and Forge calculates them internally as a 3D surface. Lighting therefore plays an important part in how the image will appear. Controls have been included for light intensity and ambient light intensity. The direction of the light source can be adjusted to be either corner, directly head on to a surface, or positioned randomly.

Of course where there's lighting, there's shading. This affects how three dimensional the surface looks. Diffuse shading is the default and it gives the general shadowed hills and gullies in the textures surface. No Shade removes all shading so just the colour of the texture is prominent, removing any bumps or craters, and Diffuse+Spec is similar to Diffuse but



with the added highlights of a specular shine. The textures can be displayed in the preview window as four bit (16 colour or greyscale) and eight bit (256 colour) on AGA machines. The texture is internally calculated in 24 bit.

To save the preview image as a bitmap, simply select Render and choose a path name for the image. Advanced features are available when rendering for selecting an image format of IFF24, TIFF, JPEG, and PPM, six levels of antialiasing, greyscale rendering for bumpmap or alpha images, programmable image resolutions, number of frames with adjustable start and ending times, and estimated time of render completion. There's also AREXX support, with included scripts for displaying the image on Picasso, Opalvision, and EGS boards.

In addition to these features the preview window can have its aspect ratio altered, be zoomed in or out, and have the overall scale of the texture increased or decreased. A small coverage display just below the preview window shows how much of the texture is visible through the window in the form of a white box.

When you're zoomed in close, the white box can be dragged around to different parts of the texture to view that particular area.

But wait, there's more!

So you've loaded all the textures, adjusted their parameters, and made numerous other surfaces. What's left to do now? How about loading more than one texture at a time? Yes, there's that word "myriad" again.

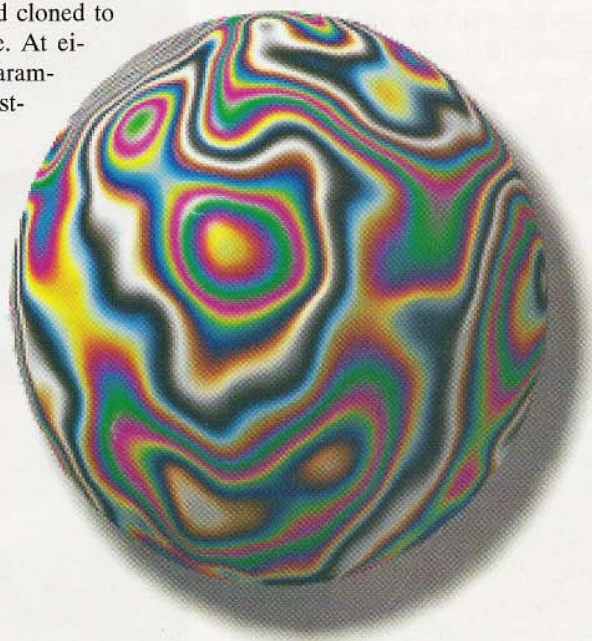
Forge lets you load up to nine textures at once, adjust each one as you like, and then layer them all together to form an even newer surface. Example. The A and B textures of Figure 1 were combined to create the bumpy swirly surface in Figure 2. Texture C was then added with A and B to form the surface in Figure 3. Each of the nine textures can be toggled on or off to experiment with all their interactions.

Animation!

Forge works with start and end key frames for its textures, so once all the parameters have been set by either dragging the sliders or entering numerically, the values can be keyframed and cloned to the end keyframe. At either keyframe, parameters can be adjusted. Indentations along the slider bars indicate the

position value of the alternate keyframes' slider buttons. Now that the start and end values have been set, the texture can be animated from one appearance to another. Certain textures have a special time parameter for animation. Examples are the Cyclone Swirl or the Radar Scope textures.

To preview the animation, Forge has an interesting system. The preview window can be broken up, or tiled, into storyboards, little images of the animation's progression. This storyboard can range from a 2x2 division of the preview window up to a 5x5 division. With the first, each image is large and has more detail but there are less of them. To see the thing moving, a small thumbnail the size of the storyboard square is displayed on Forge's screen. This image is updated with each storyboard image to create the animation. The animation can be played or stepped forwards and backwards as well as ping ponged, all with ad-





Roll your own multimedia

with Helm

By Bradley J. Collins

► What is Helm? Well, it's a multimedia authoring program. With it you can make kiosk presentation displays, reference books for your own home use or for other people or do all those other things which you can't find a program to do for you. Pottery, interstellar travel, changing the baby, things like that.

In short, Helm is an ideal and easy way to present information of any type.

What do you get?

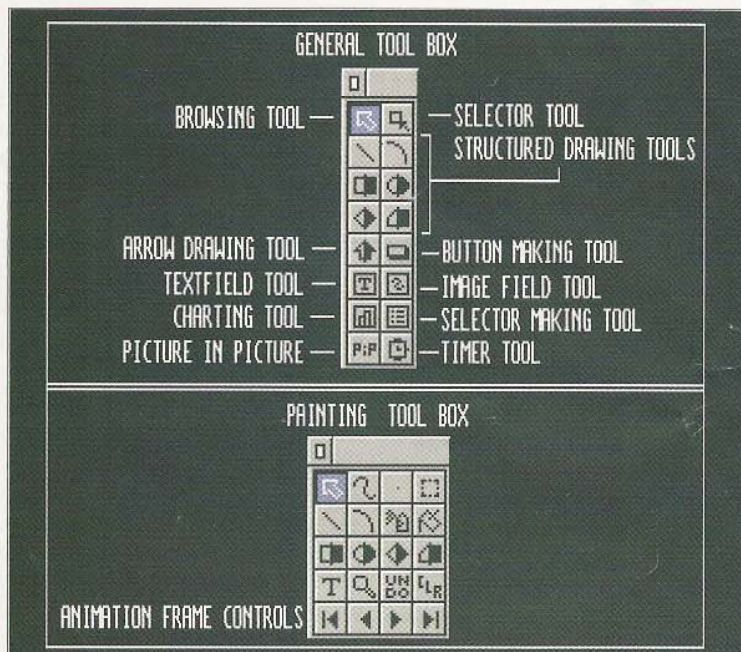
Helm comes on three disks with a 220 page A4 size manual. The manual lays flat and the text

doesn't go all the way into the centre of the page, so you can read it easily without having to jump on the book. Helm takes up just over 700k if you don't load all the example books that come with it. It requires 1Mb of RAM to run and will run on all Amigas with WB1.3 and up, but to use all of Helm's features you should have WB2.0. Helm uses the Commodore installer and worked perfectly first time.

How it works

The concept behind Helm is of a series of "Books", applications of various types, which are all linked to the "Bookcase". The Bookcase is where you start with Helm; it's a menu system for the Books.

With Helm you can display still frames or animations, you can play 8SVX or SMUS sound files, and you can use the "Dial" function to make phone calls. If you have GVP's IV24 video board you can have picture in picture capability. With the paint program you can do (almost) all your graphics internally; with the text fields you can make text files, import external text and manipulate it and with the link function any changes you



The Draw tool box and the DPaint-like Paint tool box. Some functions of both boxes are left button/right button selectable.

make within Helm will automatically update the parent file. You can use the MIDI channel to control instruments, and Helm can also control an external genlock. There are 15 effects to choose from when moving between pages.

Helm has inbuilt graphing - bar, scatter, line, pie or area, all with axis, grids, labels and regression lines if you need them. All charts can also be rotated 90 degrees if necessary. Do you need a calendar? Helm will draw one up for you. Each day can automatically be a button that when clicked on will invoke an event, for example look up the day's events and display them through a script.

Helm works on two seamlessly integrated levels. The first level is that of making an object, a button, textfield, image field or whatever that, when clicked, will perform an action from a pre-supplied list.

Giving an action to a button (or whatever) is a piece of cake. When you go to an object's action requester, you're presented with a scrolling list in the bottom window containing possible functions. Select the one you want by dragging it to the top window. Depending on the action you chose, a new window will open to the left with choices on how that action will behave.

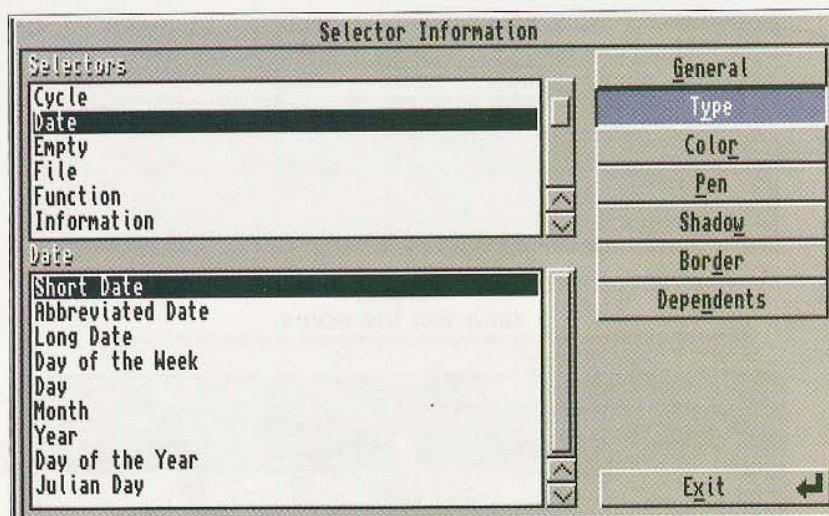
For example, suppose you put a button on a page of text and you want to show a picture if the reader hits the button. All you do is choose visibility from the bottom scrolling list, drop it into the top list and when the window on the left opens it will give you the names of all the objects on that page. All you need to do is select the name of the picture you want to appear, set that picture's original state to invisible (from the picture's information requester) and Bob's your uncle.

Say you make an address book and you want a phone dialling but-

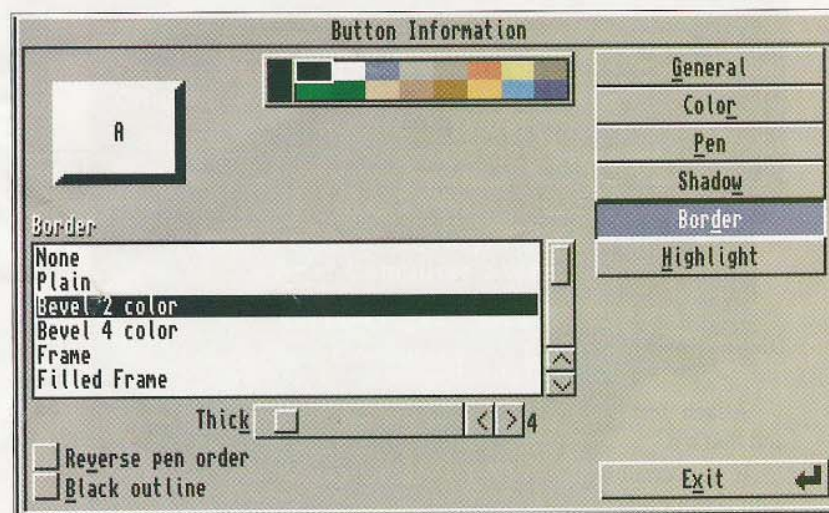
ton on each page. No problem. Make up the dial button, select touch tones from the list of possible actions and drag it to the top window, put the number to dial in the requester that comes up. Hey presto, hit the button and the touch tones come out the speaker. Hold the phone near the speaker and the number's dialled for you.

Easy scripting

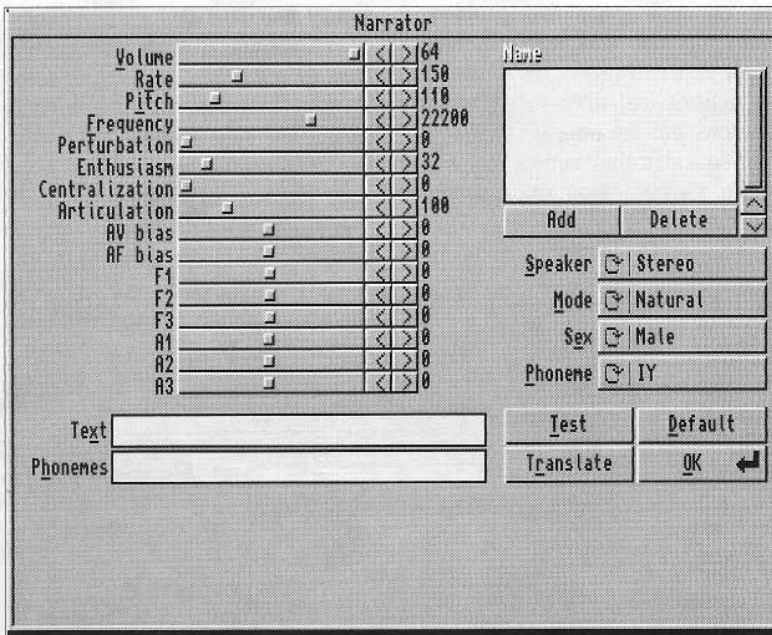
Making Helm do things like this is easy, but there are some things it can't do with the built in functions. That's where the scripting language comes in. Oh no, I hear you say, lots of unintelligible computer speak! Nope. Helm's scripting language is almost like using plain English. For example, the above phone dialling would be scripted like this:



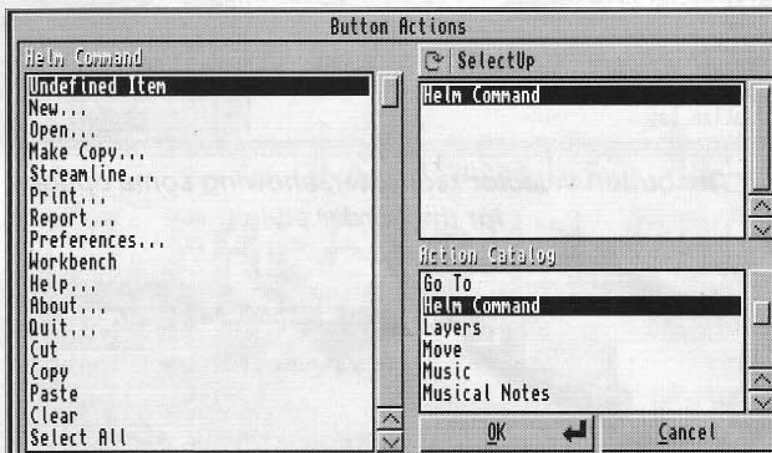
The button selector requester, showing some options for the border style.



An information requester set up to show the date, with the various formats that it can use.



The narrator tool, showing the various controls for tailoring the voice.



The button action requester set for a Helm internal command.

Dial textfield "telephone number"

Attach that script to a button, and that's it.

If you combine inbuilt actions with script commands, you can design some very powerful functions very easily. If you are making a book that'll have the same function

on each page (say an address book), you use the "Form" function. You create your page on a Form, with different textfields for different pieces of information.

Then, when you go to a new page, all the textfields and buttons are reproduced for you. All you have to do is fill them in. Couldn't be easier.

It's the sheer easiness of using Helm that I like. In the scripting language, you don't need to declare what sort of information a variable is going to have in it. Information being manipulated is stored in containers, and a container can hold anything without being told what's going into it first. You can't put a music sample into a container that already holds a picture, but just about everything else is legal.

Better than Tupperware?

In Helm, containers are very important, and powerful. If you have a container with some text in it, then you give a script command to put other text into the same container, the second lot of text will replace the first. If you do the same but use the keyword "Before" or "After" rather than the keyword "into", the original text will not be deleted, and the second lot will be added to it either before or after the original.

There are powerful and easy to use string referencing and stripping functions, so you can gain access to various bits of text within a container. For example, you can specify the first character of the second word of the fifth line of the text in the container called "storage".

The menus are fully configurable. There's a comprehensive reports facility that lets you define several reports by adding the information you want to a list and giving that report a name; then all you have to do is select the report's name to have the information you need printed out.

Built in paint

The paint program's no Deluxe Paint or Brilliance, but it's still very powerful, with 16 different modes included, (smear replace, tint, gradient 1/2, chaos and more). I particularly like the way Helm's paint program handles animations.



You define an image field by dragging out a box, and then import your image or animation. It doesn't matter whether it's single frame or a multiframe animation - they're all handled the same.

Like everything else in Helm, making buttons is a doddle. Drag out a box, go to the information requester and set the colour, border style (13 to choose from), border thickness, highlight colour and so on from a list. It's too easy for words. You can change anything you've created at any time; nothing is set in stone in Helm.

If you have the translator and narration libraries in your machine, the narrator tool is a real giggle. You go to the narrator tool, give the voice a name and then play around with the slider controls to get it sounding just the way you want. You can change the rate,

pitch, frequency, emphasis and so on, and allocate the different voices to different functions so you can have buttons that speak back to you in different voices. Hypertext is easy, also. Select the section of text, declare it as hypertext by selecting that function from the menu bar, then give it an action.

But wait, there's more!

There is far more in Helm than I have covered here; to cover everything would take a 200 page manual, which indeed it does.

Helm is like building a house. You wonder where to start and how to do the things you want to do. You make false starts and have to go back and try a different approach, and sometimes it seems that "you can't get there from here", but you can. It's all there. If you can visualise what you want,

Helm will supply the building blocks, all neatly cut to fit together smoothly. It's not a steep learning curve by any means, but it does take some time to find the best way of achieving an end, if only because there are so many ways of putting the blocks together. My only criticism is the manual. While it's very good, the layout of information and the cross referencing is a bit disorganised. Some things aren't in the index and you have to read through to them. Two index entries don't have a page number; I put this down to the fact that they've recently changed to a new manual format. Hopefully these (very minor) shortcomings will be rectified.

Am I happy with Helm? You bet. **Contact Emerald Creative on (03) 585 2055. Helm costs \$150.**

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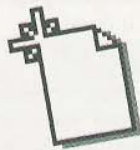
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Get organised with Digita Organiser -

a special preview



By Andrew Farrell

My desk is not neat. However, it is organised. It's a struggle against the constant barrage of news releases and review products, not to mention the constant pressure of

deadlines. The one thing that helps me stay organised is my Personal Information Manager or PIM. I wrote it using CanDo. It's a little slow, but it does just what I want.

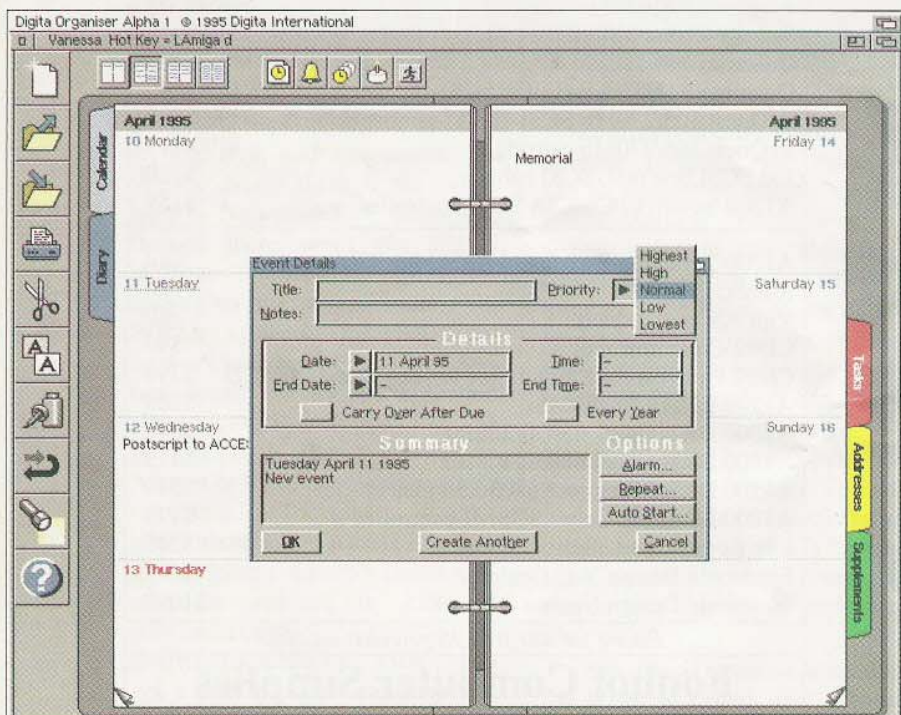
Now, there's a real PIM that promises to integrate with other applications and provide a true electronic equivalent to the ever popular Filofax. Organiser looks like a real diary. It has animated pages and tabs for dividing information into groups. There are five sections in all, however not all were implemented on the alpha copy we managed to get a sneak preview. The final version will include a Calendar, Diary, Task list, Address Book and Supplements section.

On Screen

The interface follows the same look and feel as other Digita products, such as Wordworth. That means Digita's Digisense system is included which helps you complete entries without having to conform to specific formatting standards.

For example, a date may be entered as 3 days, Mar 3, or just type the 15th and Digisense will make a decision as to what you mean depending on the context.

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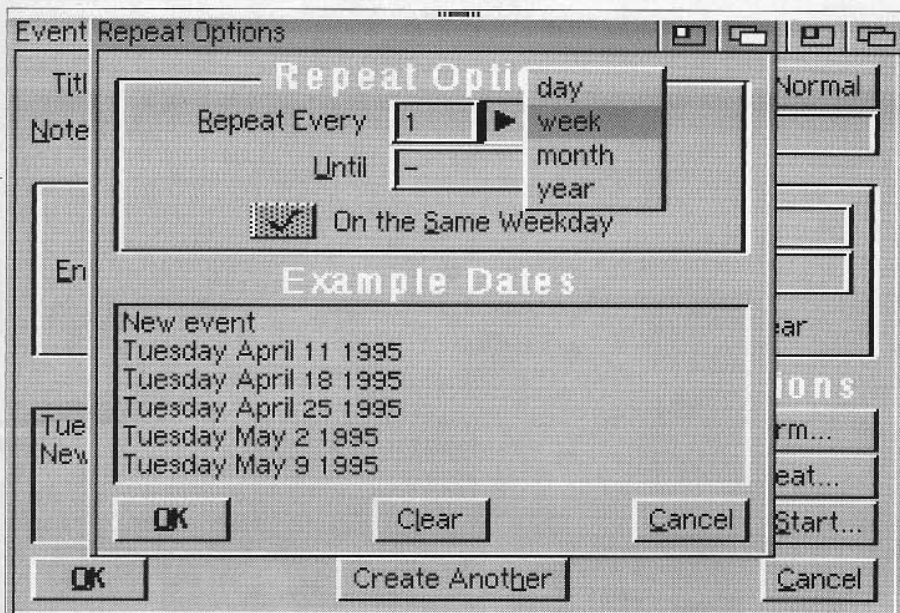
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Events can be repeated and prioritised with ease.

date like 1d for December, 1st. Pop down lists also offer mouse selectable alternatives. Standard Amiga style guidelines are adhered to, something which is becoming the norm rather than the exception with more recent products. The standard clipboard is supported, along with Workbench Appmenu and AppIcon drag and drop.

Files and Printing

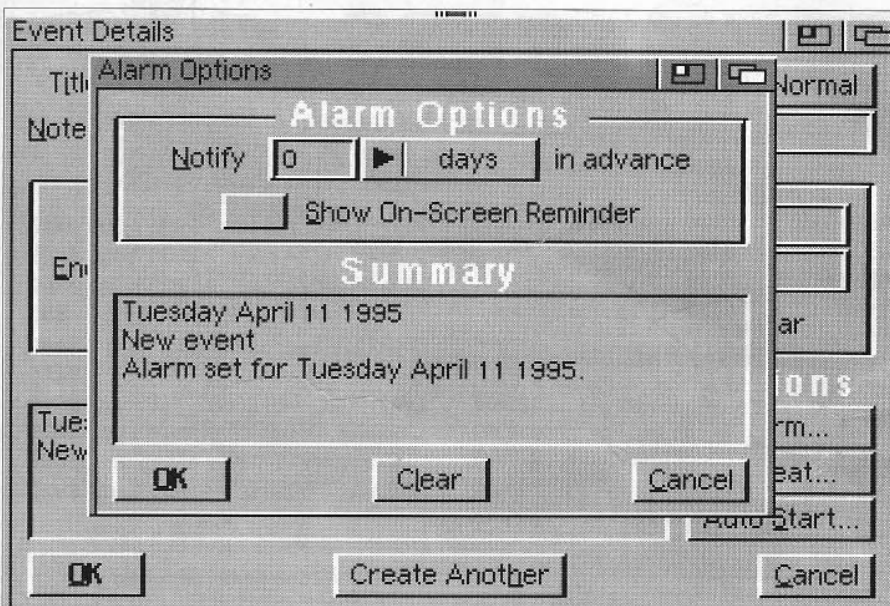
Multiple organiser files are supported, along with timed auto-save. Data can be shared with Datastore and Wordworth although we were not able to test this feature.

The old Day-by-Day file format may be imported. Information can be printed out ready to clip into your hard copy Filofax, Rolodex, Day-Timer or Time Manager. The alpha version did not have any of the print functions finished, so I look forward to testing them in the future.

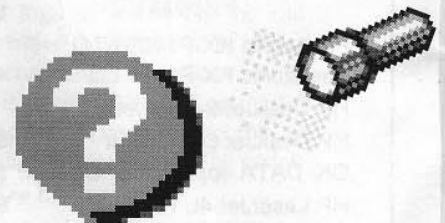
Diary and Address Book

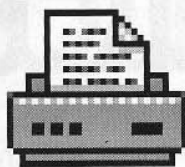
Adding events to your diary invokes a small window that makes adding the details relatively easy. The various viewing formats were not yet available, apart from the week at a glance, which tends to get a bit cluttered for my liking. Events may be given a priority, and set to repeat automatically.

For example a reminder for me to call a contributor could occur every day, week, month or year until a certain date, on the same day of the week if I so desire. Powerful stuff. Conflicts are detected, and advanced reminders can be given



Automatic reminders days or weeks in advance - but what about minutes?





using a flash, or sample sound. Reminders can be days or weeks in advance - which is annoying if you're trying to keep an appointment and need a reminder an hour in advance - hopefully the final version will fix this.

Missed reminders are displayed when you first start up - simply drop Organiser into your WBStartup drawer. Tasks can also be included, with five levels of priority. In the address book section, a nice touch is the option of choosing the field name for the second telephone field so you can make it a fax number, home number, email address or whatever.

However, an extra phone field would be handy as many people have a fax and email address these days, plus a home number as well as the normal office number.

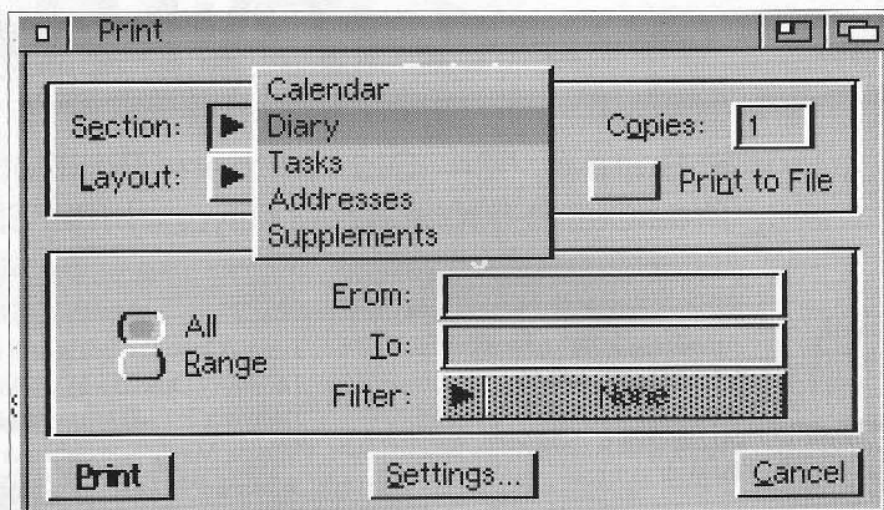
More space here please Digita - and how about a dialler? Overall, the diary offers a reasonably good range of features considering this is only the alpha product.

Overall

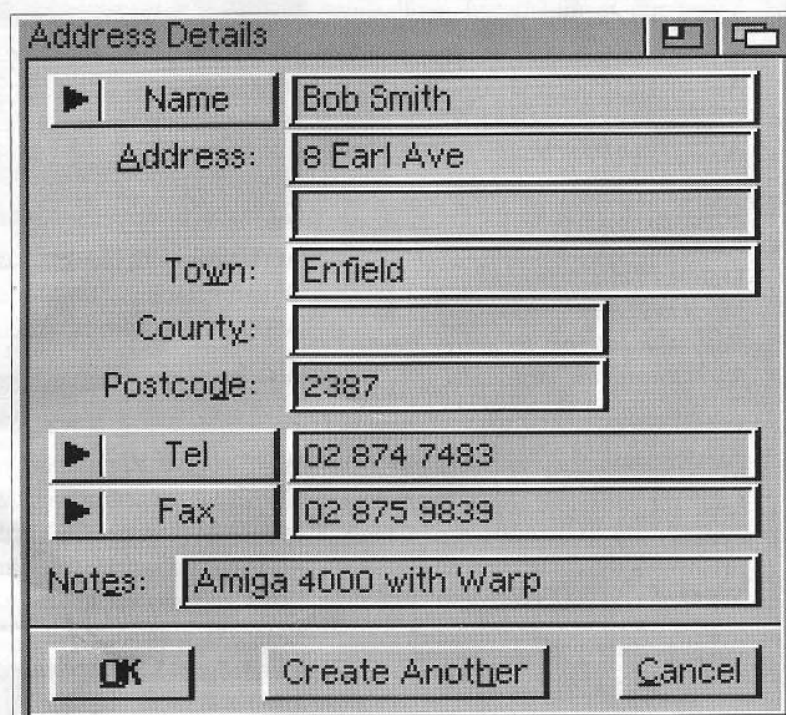
Digita's Organiser looks very promising. Many features were still missing from the alpha version, however the look and feel was very impressive.

Digita are going about expanding their suite of products in a very professional and organised fashion. They are well placed to become a cornerstone of Amiga development in the future. For more information contact Amadeus on (02) 651 1711 or fax (02) 651 1710. Recommended retail price will be \$99. Expect to see a full review within the next two issues.

□



For those on the run, your diary can be printed in various standards formats.



Only two telephone fields- but the second can have various field labels. This section needs to be expanded.

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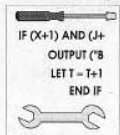
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PROGRAMMING

ZedREXX

Simple GUI creation

By Nigel Donaldson

Released without any fanfare in December 1994 was a freely-distributable evaluation version of ZedREXX for the Amiga. It comes from a company called Reality Check, led by a former Commodore employee, David Junod, noted most for the development of the AmigaGuide system.

To quote from the manual, ZedREXX is "a REXX Language Extension that adds sophisticated Graphical User Interface (GUI) capabilities, using an easy-to-use yet extremely powerful syntax". Put simply, this means you can easily build a GUI into your REXX scripts.

The only other product that does this sort of thing is rexxarplib, but the latest, and probably last, version of this was written in the early days of Workbench 1.3 and shows its age. Indeed, its author is quoted as saying, "Finally I can toss away rexxarplib.library!" Enough said.

Rexxarplib, though, is free, unlike ZedREXX. The freely distributable archive is an evaluation version of ZedREXX; you have to register it if you use it regularly. But ZedREXX provides font and

text sensitive layout of all GUI elements, drag and drop support, iconification, resource tracking, automatic snapshotting of window size and placement, support for context-sensitive on-line help and control via keyboard shortcuts. Not one of these is in rexxarplib.

You need a 1Mb Amiga with KS2 or above running AREXX. The registered ZedREXX package includes bonus Amiga memorabilia - I picked up four miniature Boing and Rainbow-Tick Amiga faceplates! There's also an oversight - the registered ZRX program maintains it is the freely-distributable demo version.

What you get

The package is installed with the standard Installer. It's not very big - just a few libraries, class files, and support utilities and commands, together with several basic examples that demonstrate most of the features of ZedREXX. You also get a nice formattable text displayer (Viewer) with support for in-line images, a program with a command set strongly resembling that of AmigaGuide.

ZedREXX scripts can be run

either from Workbench (through a Project icon) or the shell. Note that the tool required to operate such a script is ZRX, rather than the standard Commodore RX. Listing 1 shows a simple ZedREXX script file, zDemo1.zrx, that opens an Intuition window with some simple menu options and a text display gadget and button gadget. The result of this script is shown in Figure 1.

Script structure

There are essentially two components to this demo script. Firstly, there's the application data section at the top of the listing between the zInterface and zEndInterface commands. This is where all "zObjects" (Intuition windows, menus, and gadgets) and their attributes are defined. Typical attributes are a gadget's text label and label positioning, and the active element of an object with multiple elements, such as a cycle gadget.

Next, there's the event-processing section. Each object defined in the application data section has an event, or action, associated with it. For example, button gadgets and menu options can be

Listing 1

```

/*
** $VER: zDemol.zrx V1.0 N.J.Donaldson (17/03/95)
**
** A demonstration of some features of ZedREXX.
*/

OPTIONS RESULTS

/*
** Application Data.
*/
'zInterface zDemol PubScreen Workbench'

/*
** Window.
*/
'zWindow MainWin Label "zDemol.zrx" Open Vertical CloseEvent'

/*
** Menus.
*/
'zMenu Project'
'zObject Button Menu_Quit Label "&Quit " SelectEvent'
'zEndMenu'

/*
** Gadgets.
*/
'zGroup Vertical Alignment Center'
'zObject TextDisplay Value "A demonstration script that lacks imagination." SelectEvent'
'zObject Button Button_Agreed Label "&Agreed..." SelectEvent'
'zEndGroup'

'zEndWindow'
'zEndInterface'

/*****/

/*
** Event Processing.
*/

'zDoMethod zDemol Activate'

DO FOREVER
'zWaitForEvent stem.'

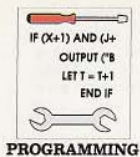
INTERPRET "zRC="RESULT"()"
END

/*
** Event Processing functions. To keep it simple, they will all exit.
*/

Menu_Quit_Select:
zDemol_Quit:
MainWin_Close:
Button_Agreed_Select:

EXIT

```



selected, and so need to have a `_Select` event function for processing. Similarly, a slider gadget allows the gadget handle to be moved, and so has a `_Move` event function. If a slider gadget defined in the application data section and named `Slider1` is moved by the user, the ZedREXX interpreter will call a function named `Slider1_Move` that has to be supplied by the script writer.

The script in Listing 1 requires four event functions for a fully event-handled script; one for the window's close gadget (`MainWin_Close`), one for the menu selection (`Menu_Quit_Select`), another for the button gadget (`Button_Agreed_Select`), and a final one (`zDemo1_Quit`) for killing of the scripts by the Commodities Exchange program (as all scripts are activated as commodities). For simplicity in this demo script, these four functions don't have any code - they just exit.

Lots of objects

Figure 2 shows a window with a selection of the standard Intuition gadgets available in ZedREXX as objects. Going down the window from the top, they are `ButtonG`, `TextEntry`, `Listview`, `Line`, `Checkbox`, `Radio group`, `Palette`, and `Button`. (`ButtonG` objects are primarily for button gadgets containing bitmap graphics, while `Button` objects are the same as your regular text "OK" and "Cancel" buttons).

The objects missing from this example are `Cycle`, `IntegerDisplay` and `Entry`, `Scroller`, `Slider`, and `TextDisplay`. Unfortunately, the colourwheel class of `WB3.x` is not supported by the current ZedREXX `Palette` object. In addition, the `Checkbox` and `Radio group` objects aren't font sensitive; they stay at a size suitable for a 640x256 screen using a `Topaz 8` font. I don't

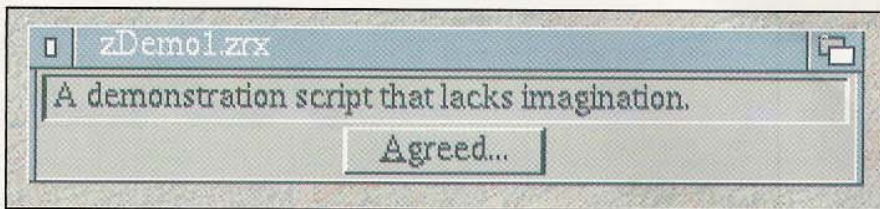


Fig 1.

think this is the fault of ZedREXX, but a legacy of an error in `gadtools.library` that first appeared in `WB2.0`.

One other shortcoming is that there's no font attribute for the objects that can include text. The font used for all text is the Preferences screen font (the one used in the screen and window title bars). Unfortunately, there's no discrimination between mono-spaced and proportional fonts, which leads to glaringly obvious text positioning faults in some situations, one of which is visible in Figure 1. The "a demonstration script..." text is meant to define the size of the `Text Display` gadget, which is calculated so that the full text string can be displayed, and no more. The sizing algorithm behaves as if it's working with a non-proportional font, and falls short with a proportional font like `Times`. I point this out because it's especially annoying when you need centered text.

Object layout

The objects of Figure 2 are positioned in the window using an algorithm that does not allow objects to overlap, but minimises the size of the resultant window. However, the general flow of objects is totally controlled by the user, through the use of layout options. These include `Justification` and `Alignment` (which control the flow of objects within an object group both horizontally and vertically), and `ChildMaxHeight` and `ChildMaxWidth`, which determine whether or not all objects within a group should have the same height or width as the tallest or widest object in the



Fig 2.

group. There are sufficient options to keep the average script writer happy.

You can insert bitmap graphics into windows with `ButtonG` objects in three ways. ZedREXX can handle images from `IFF` graphic brushes, normal icons, and user-supplied bitmap arrays (called glyphs). The image of the `MagicWB` logo shown in the top `ButtonG` object of Figure 2 is, in fact, the actual `MagicWB` icon image. This is achieved by adding the following two commands to the application data section of the script:

(See Listing 2)

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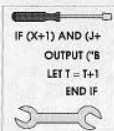
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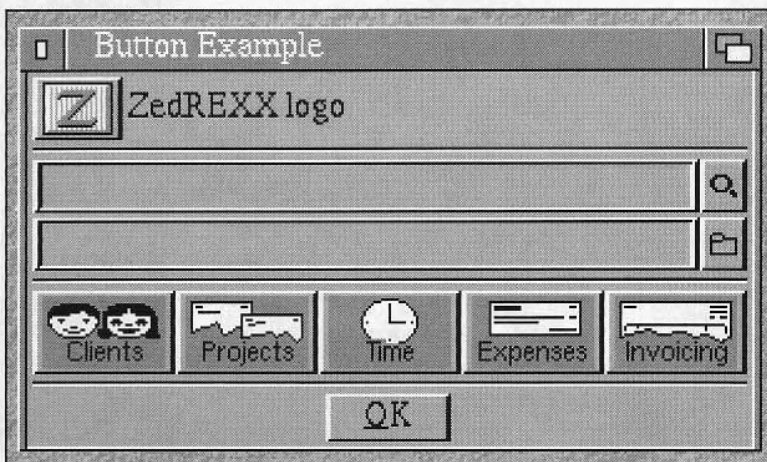
PROGRAMMING

```
'zImage MagicWBIcon File="work:MagicWB.info"
...
'zObject ButtonG Button1 Image=MagicWBIcon'
```

Similarly, the button gadget attached to the right of the TextEntry object uses a folder (directory) glyph, contained in the hexadecimal string following "Data =" :

```
'zImage Folder1 Width=11 Height=9 Depth=1
Data="7800 8400 87E0 F820 8020 8020 8020 8020 FFE0"
...
'zObject ButtonG Button2 Glyph=Folder1'
```

Listing 2



ZedREXX supports all standard ASL requesters (file, directory, and font, and screenmode for WB3.x users) through the 'zRequest' command. Strangely, though, there aren't any simple message requesters (EasyRequest()'ers for programmers). On WB2.x systems, the ASL requesters look terrible and lack features found in a few public domain alternatives. But if you also use REXXReqTools (latest version on Aminet is V1.3, in pub/aminet/util/rexx/REXXReqTools.lha, 65k), which provides an AREXX interface to ReqTools requesters (latest version on Aminet is 2.2c, in pub/aminet/util/libs/ReqTools22c.lha, 410k), you get a truly pleasant and adaptable environment.

More features

ZedREXX doesn't have screen opening facilities, but windows can be opened on already opened Public Screens by passing the screen name to the 'zInterface' command at startup (see Listing 1). Similarly, the name of the (automatically created) AREXX port associated with the script can be set at startup, but a default name is always supplied. AmigaGuide help is available, provided the scriptwriter also creates a Guide file. A handy feature that can be attributed to each script is a "persistence database", more commonly known as a settings or preference file.

This file is updated each time the script is exited, and contains such things as window positions and the current values of all zOb-

“...way better than rexxarplib.”

jects that maintain values (the 'Persist' attribute was applied to the object). Finally, a window opened with ZedREXX can easily be made an AppWindow onto which icons can be dropped. This makes retrieving filenames less complicated.

You get two extra AREXX function host libraries with the package. REXXDos.library gives you access to some of the dos.library functions available to C and assembly programmers. A full description of each function contained in the library is given. REXXUtil is the other mentioned library and it allegedly covers access to clipboard and environment variable functions, amongst others, but there's no documentation for it. To be fair, Mr. Junod states that the current version of the manual is a draft, and will be updated in due course; promised are tutorials and how-to sections.

Overall


So how does ZedREXX stack up? Well, it's way better than rexxarplib. The run-time interpretation of the GUI definition is relatively fast, although scripts incorporating a large application data section still take a few seconds to appear, even on a 4000/040. The current version is only 1.0, but it's a stable product (given the listed beta-testers, you'd expect that to be the case!) I definitely think it's worth buying. At US\$35, the price may seem a little steep, but if you do a bit of AREXX programming it's a fair deal.

My only reservation is whether


```

IF (X+1) AND (J+
OUTPUT 'B
LEFT = T+1
END IF

```



PROGRAMMING

ZedREXX will continue to be developed. If there's enough interest it seems likely, but my attempts to contact the author (by email) have sadly fallen on deaf ears. Mr. Jun-

od states in the registered ReadMe file that he intends to develop ZedREXX for competing platforms (OS/2 and Windows).

ZedREXX V1.0

Reality Check, Inc.

5543 Edmondson Pike, Suite 134
Nashville, TN 37211
USA

Ph and Fax: +1 (615) 898-0599

Requirements:

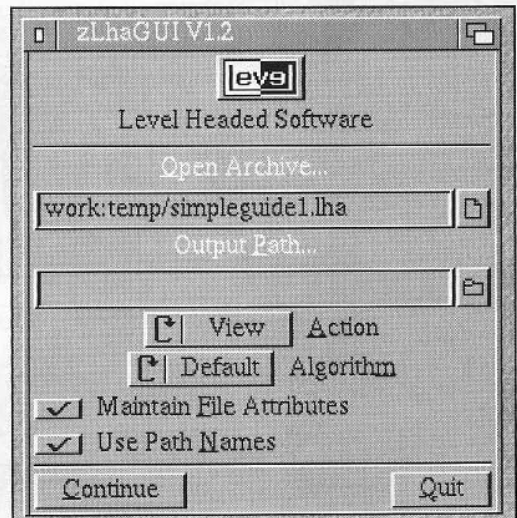
A 1Mb Amiga with KS2.04 or above and ARexx.

Evaluation version:

Freely distributable. To be registered if used for any length of time. Archive located on Aminet, pub/aminet/util/ rexx/ZedREXX.lha.

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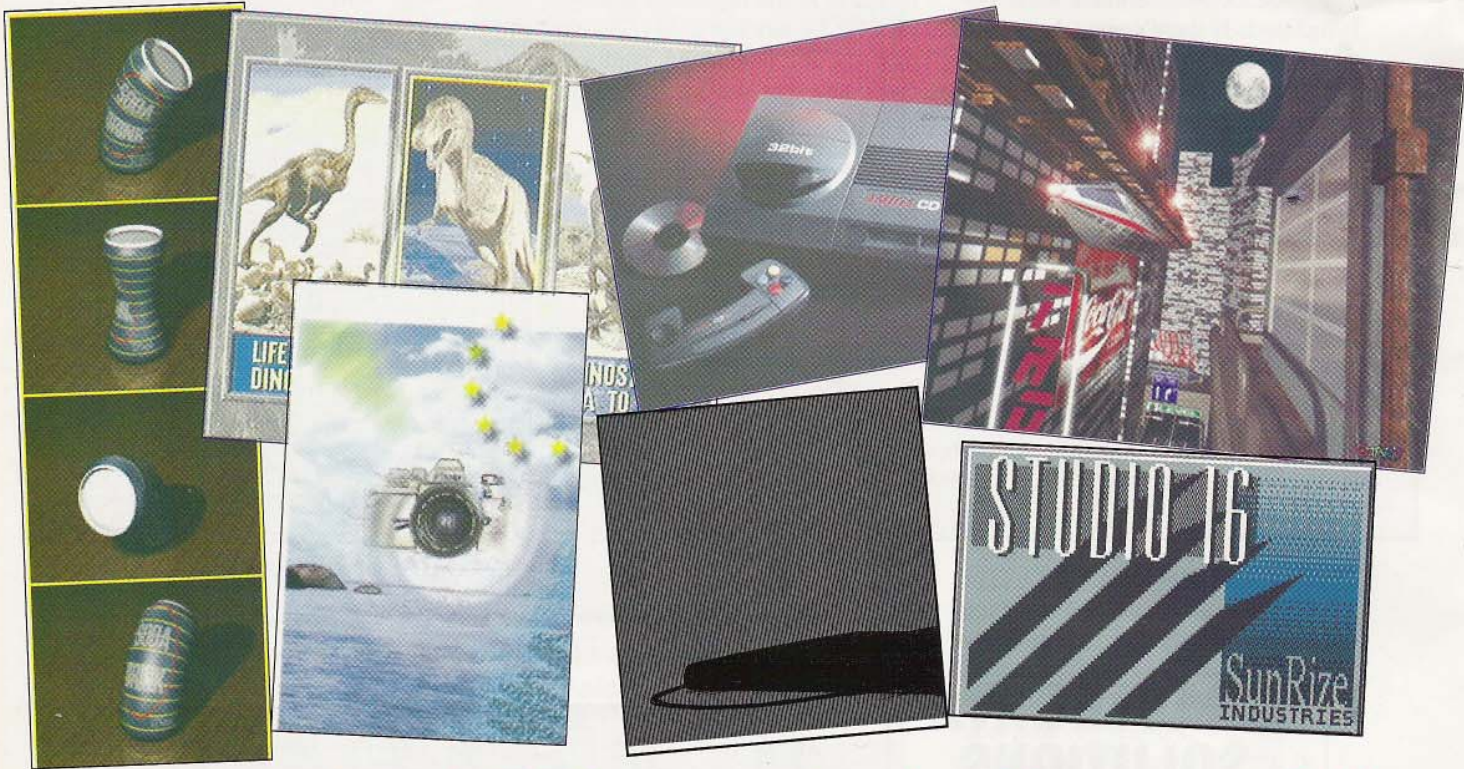
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Continued from page 26...

Many regular and casual net surfers create their own home pages for you to visit. The best way I've found to find these home pages is to pick a newsgroup you're interested in, and simply read the messages in it. Many messages have http:// addresses at the end.

Click on the address with your mouse and you'll usually end up on the message writer's home page.

What you find on these home pages depends on the user, but if he was posting in a newsgroup which interested you, it's likely some of his/her interests will be similar to yours and that you'll find a page or two listing his/her favourite Web sites, with an explanation of why he/she thought they were good. Click the name and you're off to the site.

Naughty pics on the Internet?

Yes mums and dads, I found that all those stories we hear about girly pictures being easy to find on the Internet to be quite true. And it didn't take any huge effort to find them either, so it's well worth your while to exercise some parental supervision if you intend providing your young child with net access.

On a happier note, I tried (for experimental purposes only of course) yet was unable to find any material which I would personally consider to be of a pornographic nature. This isn't to say such sites don't exist mind, just that I wasn't able to locate any.

The naughty pics I saw can just as easily be found on the covers of popular girly magazines at just about any large newsagency, in full view of anyone that wants to venture in and browse.

Examples are the popular American Playboy and Penthouse

***"It's just
so damn
slow!"***

magazines, both of which have pages on the Internet.

I visited the Playboy site and without any proof of age was able to electronically "meet" any of the last six months' Playmates, complete with a GIF pic of the relevant bunny and the associated blurb.

There's also the opportunity to download a "previously unpublished" nude picture of each bunny - this is rather disturbing, and brings home the realization of how this type of no holds barred electronic access to the world could soon get out of hand. People complain about some hobby bulletin boards carrying this type of material, where more times than not, the operators of such systems have strict requirements for proof of age. I could easily fill many pages describing my 20 or so hours of Web wandering, but in a nutshell, I was relatively unimpressed.

Yes, there's a mountain of information available on just about any topic that you can think of. Yes, some of the graphics are impressive. But unless you have hours to kill to just sit around and wait for all the pretty pages to draw, you're going to have to forego the graphics.

If you're seriously after information and just want to be able to use your mouse to get at it, turn off the "Auto Load Images" feature of the software you're using and things will happen a lot faster.

If you want a REALLY quick way to surf the net and get at the same info, the good old Lynx type web viewer which most Internet

provider sites will present you with exactly the same information in less than half the time.

The only cost is that you'll need to use your keyboard arrow and enter keys instead of your mouse to move around and you won't be able to access the pretty graphics. No big deal if it's really information you crave.

Conclusions

I've been left with mixed feelings about the graphical interface for the World Wide Web. I like the graphics and the user interface, but I hate the slowness. Because of this, I find myself logging into my Internet service provider via my Unix Shell account more often than I do with TCP/IP.

Just for those that would blame my slow speed experience on my measly 386SX/33 machine, I also logged into my provider on a friend's 486DX2/66, using his 14.4k modem. There was absolutely no difference in regards to speed. Sure the software worked quicker, but the updates of the screens were exactly the same. A 28.8k modem might help a bit, but what price must one pay to use a mouse?

□

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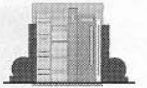
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The final word

*A book no computer user
should be without!*

By Daniel Rutter

► The aim of a dictionary is to pin down language, at least for a time, so people have a point of reference they can use to make sure that what they say really is what they mean.

The dictionary-writer's task is tricky enough in the real world; venturing into the fantasy land of computer terminology is something few have attempted.

One who has is Jonar C. Nader, an Australian writer who has now produced not one but two editions of Prentice Hall's Illustrated Dictionary of Computing.

I've been using this book regularly as I wrote a few articles, and I'm now wondering how I got along without it. It's the thick end of 700 pages, and all of them are good.

To say the Illustrated Dictionary contains definitions for everything to do with computers would be an overstatement, as the computer world's a continually shifting morass of changing names, but almost any computer-related term you care to name is in this book, with a well-researched and usually very up to date definition.

If a term isn't listed in this book, it's likely that nobody's yet quite sure of its meaning anyway.

There are more than 160 illustrations, but this is no picture book. That's fair enough; the bulk of the definitions are either inherently unillustratable or could only have a picture of some anonymous hunk of circuitry. If you want piles of pictures, buy an encyclopedia.

Get it right!

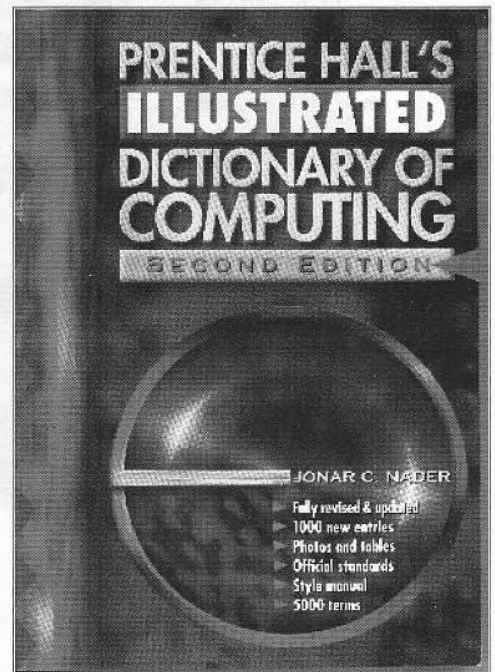
The Illustrated Dictionary also contains a Style Guide that shows you how to write comprehensibly about technology, with plenty of information on the fraught topics of acronyms and abbreviations, and broader rules which apply to writing clearly about anything. This book gives you a neat, simple, one-place reference to make sure that all of those pesky abbreviations come out right.

The abbreviation for megabyte is Mb, not m, mb, M, mB, MB, MBs, M-byte, M-Bytes, Meg, MEG, M-B or anything else. I knew that. The abbreviation for bits per second is Bps. I didn't know that - I was using the popular

but incorrect bps, which actually stands for bytes per second. Mea culpa.

Shortcomings

Naturally, the book isn't perfect. The mad rush of computer technology into the future means





***“Almost
any computer
related term you care
to name is in this
book.”***

that by the time a book hits the streets it has to be a bit out of date, and that's the case here.

There are also omissions largely I suppose because the author had to draw the line somewhere in such a pervasive industry as computers. There are also a few inevitable, but minor, typos - for example, the entry for the Commodore CDTV informs us that it used a Motorola "6800" processor, instead of the 68000 it really had.

The pile of glowing quotes on the back of the Dictionary says, amongst other things, that this is "a perfect reference" - well, according to the CEO of Compaq, anyway. I wouldn't go that far.

But it is certainly the best serious computer terminology reference I've ever seen, and an enormously useful resource for amateur or professional computer users, with no serious omissions or errors I could find. If you buy it as a present, get one for yourself too.

***Published by Prentice Hall. ISBN
0-13-205725-5.***



Liquidation Trivia

At the time of writing we've had no news about the April 20th Commodore ownership auction - our lucky subscribers are likely to get an update on their cover sheet, the rest of you are going to have to wait.

To pass the time, here's some amusing trivia about the whole affair.

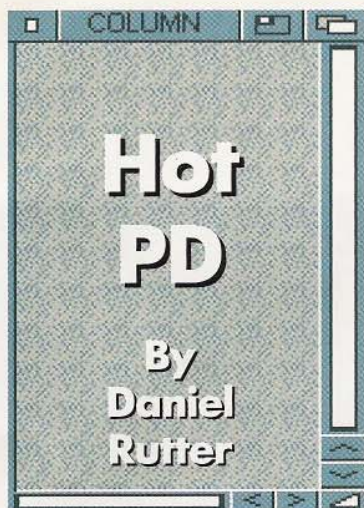
A few Commodore trademarks and patents aren't for sale, for various reasons. The three most ridiculous are Commodore UK's trademark on the globally famous blockbuster 80's game "Maggot Mania", Commodore France's invaluable patent on a "device for controlling the opening and closing of fluidtight doors", and Commodore's lapsed patents on their digital thermometer and thermostat, devices they sold quite a lot of in the US before they started making computers at all.

More than 3000 CD32s comprise the only inventory of completed machines listed among the huge list of stuff for sale. People who've paid top dollar for one of the consoles will no doubt be hugely pleased to know that they're valued at \$US22.50 each.

The price tag put on Commodore's intellectual property and its CDTV/CD32 software licenses is a mere \$US12,000. This probably includes at least two CD32 licenses which were actually granted to developers after the liquidation started - obviously some parts of Commodore didn't know they were dead yet.

Of course, technically, Commodore-Amiga, Inc., Commodore Business Machines US and Commodore International Services Corporation all still have a glimmer of life, because somebody has to represent them for contract-signing purposes. But the end-of-year company party's not going to be anything very exciting - the staff of all of them put together is approximately one person.

The original liquidation happened on April 29th, 1994 - it seems likely that news of the takeover will beat the one year anniversary by a few scant days!



► Welcome back to Hot PD, the column that tells you all about what's cheap or free in the world of Amiga software and subliminally encourages you to pick up the phone and dial 1800 252 879 and order the companion disks they're only \$9.50 including postage you know you want them you've got to have them if you had them you'd be happy call now call now call now.

Ahem.

On with the show.

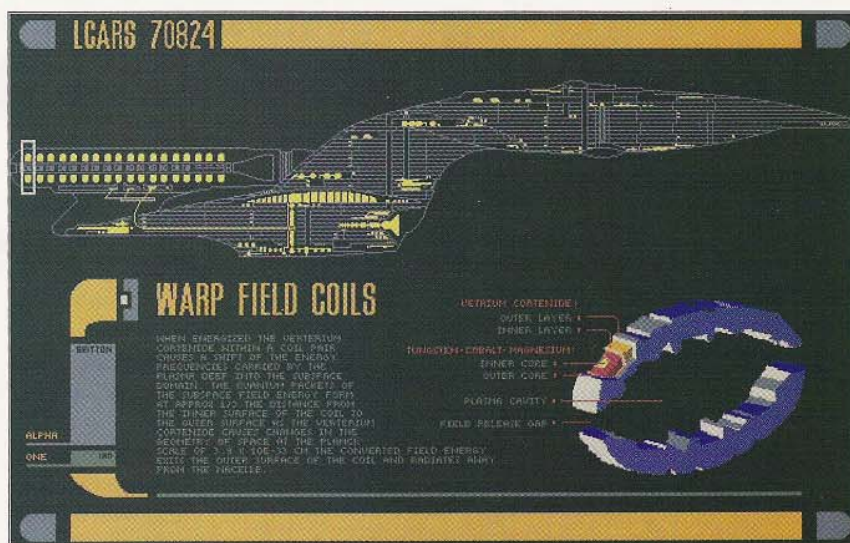
☆Trek alert!

Let's get the Star Trek bit over early, then all the guys in uniform with the authentic noisemaking communicator badges'll get out of here and leave us in peace. I found on Aminet a recently uploaded but not very new (1992) animation of a Trek computer screen showing the Enterprise-D, with various technical information (text faithful to the Okuda/Sternbach Technical Manual). It's 258 frames and looks very groovy, though I pledge never to leave it running on my machine in hopes of impressing anyone.

Yes, I went to the preview of Generations. I wore jeans and a plain T-shirt. Shall we move on?

☆☆AntiTopaz

I don't understand what it is that people hate so much about the standard Topaz 8 font as supplied with Kickstart 2 and higher. Sure, the old style 1.x Topaz was lumpy



If you run the animation at max speed, you can pretend to be Data.

and ugly, but the new one looks fine to me. Simple and legible. To the Topaz-haters I am wont to say "get a life, guys."

But if you simply cannot bear to have anything standard on your Workbench, AntiTopaz is probably what you've been looking for. It patches the system so that whatever you've set as your system default font gets used in place of Topaz. If your default font is bigger than Topaz's 8x8 pixels you'll get some alarming screen formatting, but otherwise it works fine.

There. I hope you feel better now.

☆☆AXLife

I raved about this particularly nice implementation of the fascinating cellular automaton Life a few months ago; it's been updated.

Potted explanation of Life for people who don't know. Game played on square grid. Squares in grid can be on or off. If square has three on neighbors, it's on next turn. If has two on neighbours, it doesn't change state - if on, stays on, if off, stays off. Any other situation and cell will be off next turn. Sounds simple, actually produces

patterns of brain-numbing complexity, especially when you start using vast working areas, which AXLife allows.

So what's new? Well aside from 221 included patterns to play with instead of the 176 you used to get, there's an Amigaguide help file you can call from within the program, a number of tweaks including complete compatibility with SysIHack (if you don't have a 24 bit graphics board, ignore this), correct diagonal movement and support for many of the original Xlife keys. There are also niceties like asking you to confirm if you try to overwrite a pattern file, and fractional magnifications, which let you see up to 64 times as much Life area, at the expense of resolution.

Program complexity

- ☆ Even Nog could use this.
- ☆☆ Quark would use it, but not pay for it.
- ☆☆☆ Odo could turn into something that could figure this out.
- ☆☆☆☆ O'Brien could do it, complaining all the way.



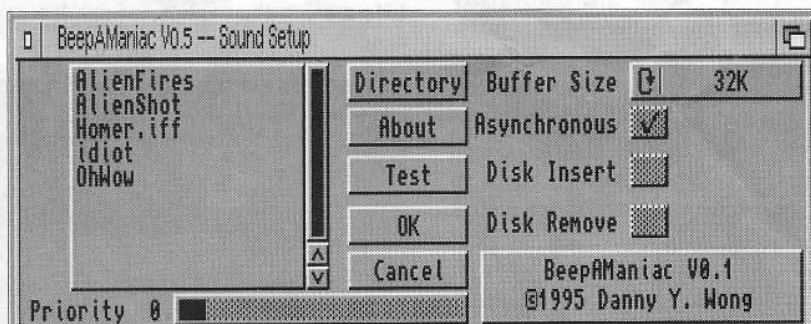
You still only need Workbench 2 and 850k of RAM to run AXLife, although of course it's happier with more of everything. AXLife is also pretty humungous in the storage it takes up - all those little pattern files mean that, although it looks like it should all fit on one floppy when you look at the total file sizes, it actually over-runs by more than 100k.

It's far smaller when you archive it, though, so it's on the companion disks with one of my patented Lazy Dan's Installer Systems, which are not especially user friendly or elegant in design, but sure don't take me long to make. You'll need a hard disk.

☆☆BeepAManiac

Here's a program that's no use at all. WB2 users can set up a sampled sound to play when their computer beeps - my computer's gone "D'oh!" when it beeps for quite a while now. but what if you want to randomly play one of a number of sounds? You need BeepAManiac!

Just tell it the directory to get its sounds out of and away it goes. You can use samples up to 256k in size, which is one hell of an annoying beep at 10kHz. BeepAManiac's random selection doesn't seem nearly as random as it could be - the same sounds keep coming up. But hey, it's worth what you pay. On the companion disks.



Random beep noises. Now that's useful, isn't it?

☆☆☆LibraryManager

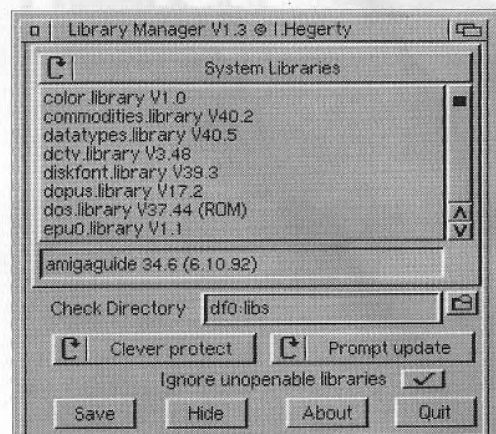
The world is full of dumb installers. Trust me on this one, I'm responsible for a few. The classic sign of a dumb installer is that when it installs the support files for a program, particularly libraries, it doesn't check to see if you've already got the library or, more importantly, if you've already got a newer version. Thus, installing a program that's been around for a while can stomp your libraries.

Enter LibraryManager. It's a WB2 commodity designed to control your library files, with a number of options. The niftiest of these uses a temporary directory for any libraries that something tries to install; it then checks the library version (the REAL version, not the dud one that's usually in the version string...) against the one that's already installed and either auto-overwrites older or nonexistent libraries, or asks you if you want to replace the older version.

You can also scan disks automatically for newer libraries, even if you're not installing anything from them.

LibraryManager's a very well written, genuinely useful program that anyone who shuffles software a lot should have. On the companion disks.

Incidentally, I'm pleased to say that after three quarters of an hour of detective work, LibraryManager



LibraryManager's plain but useful interface.

also helped me identify the one library out of the hundred-odd in my system that, when opened, caused my fast RAM to fragment into 30k chunks and hence brought most operations to a grinding halt. The author warns about old versions of xprkermit.library (1.111 works fine), but the one that blew up for me was kd_freq.library, version 3.-1 (a typically meaningless version string...), size 44852 bytes. If you've got it, kill it.

☆☆VList

Speaking of dud files, here's a list of them. Hip Amiga users know about bootblock viruses and use virus checkers, which is why the Amiga world's practically free of them these days. The same pretty much goes for file viruses - Amiga users, even those of us who spend a lot of time using online services loaded with software of dubious provenance, have far less to fear from electronic microorganisms than those poor benighted IBM folk.

However, the Amiga world's not bereft of recent viruses, and one of the niftiest ways for their creators to spread them is to disguise them as something good - a new version of a popular utility, a magic program to make your mo-



dem faster, whatever. Along with these "Trojan horses", there are also a fair few non-virus hoax program updates. I don't know what kind of loser thinks it's a cool idea to whip out a hex editor and make a program look newer than it is, but the dweebs are out there. How do you keep up?

With VList. On the companion disks for this column you'll find the 23-03-95 edition of this rather useful text file, which contains a listing, with terse descriptions, of 137 files you're better off without. Essential reading for the educated Amiga PD hound.

☆☆☆LogiMouse103

Let's say you have a Logitech compatible serial mouse, for an IBM. Let's say you want to use it with the Amiga. You can, with this driver. You'll need an adaptor to change the nine pin IBM connector into a 25 pin Amiga one, but then you'll be able to use your Logitech mouse (or trackball) on the Amiga. You can also swap the right and middle button functions if you like. On the companion disks.

☆☆Nuke

Deleting files does not destroy them, any more than a three foot picket fence keeps burglars out. A deleted file has simply been marked as OK to write over; if nothing's actually taken advantage of the invitation and written in the space the file took, it's still recoverable. Generally, this is a good thing, because it means accidentally deleted files can be recovered. But what if you really want a file zapped for good? Use Nuke.

Nuke deletes files. But before it does, it overwrites them with 0s, then with 1s, then with 0s again. So the final file that gets deleted is all made of zeros; you can undelete it, but all you can see is the

filename and the size. The three-pass erase is for the superparanoid out there, afraid that the CIA or the KGB or the aliens can tell what bytes were when they've only been erased once; this is not entirely nonsense but it's pretty James Bond.

Nuke does not ask you if you're sure. Nuke does not have a help template. Nuke is not a program for wimps. If you're tough enough for Nuke, it's on the companion disks.

☆☆☆☆PCFlop

You can connect standard PC floppy drives to Amigas - both double density and high density. It is not easy, but it can be done, and with Amiga high density drives running at around four times the price of IBM ones it's tempting. Real skinflints can even connect 5.25 inch double and single (shudder) density drives, though unless you're playing with emulators for antique computers I don't know why you'd bother.

If you've got a soldering iron, a multimeter and some experience with electronics (this is NOT just a match the pinouts exercise - extra ICs are involved...), PCFlop is the

package that'll tell you what to do. Along with eight schematic pictures, there's a good Amigaguide file in mildly fractured English that gives you hypertext access to all the instructions and background information.

If you think you might be up to the challenge, check it out on the companion disks.

☆☆Don't 1.1

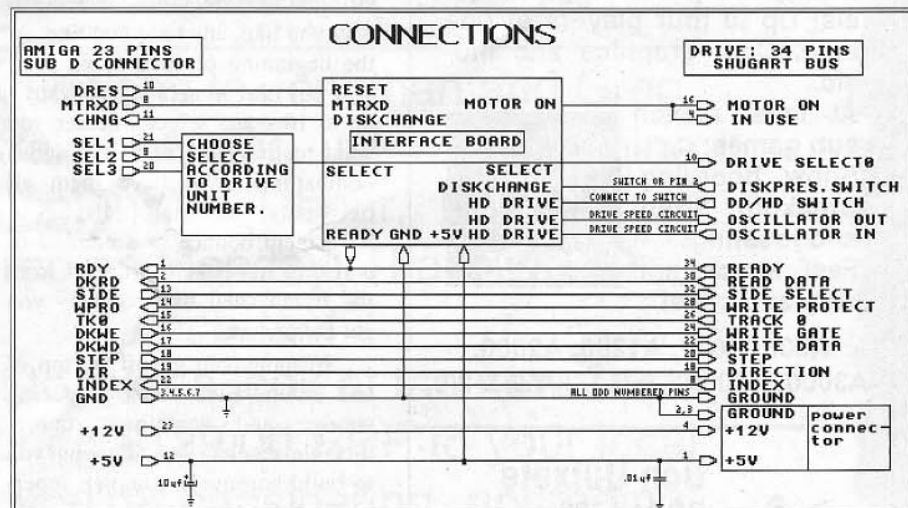
I wish I'd had this one in time for the April issue. Yes, friends, the world's least useful program, Don't, has been updated. You remember Don't, don't you? I mentioned it about two years ago.

You use it to defuse potentially dangerous commands, like "delete #?". Simply prefix "dont" to the line, viz:

dont delete #?

and Dont will keep your data intact, by doing absolutely nothing. The new features? Well, it's smaller now and written in assembly, so it does nothing even faster, and it says "OK, I won't <your command>" when used.

If you want evidence for the dissolution of Western society, here it is. On the companion disks, natch.



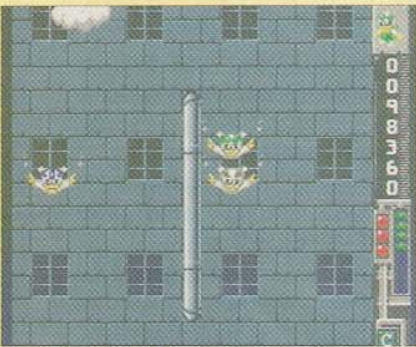
If this picture frightens you, you're not up to hooking up a PC drive to your Amiga.

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Dealer enquiries welcome

Charr

It's been 13 whole columns since last I mentioned an Artillery clone. I know, it doesn't seem that long, does it? Well, the latest one to grab my attention is called Charr.

Another brief timeout for puzzled readers unfamiliar with the genre. Artillery games, classically, have two little tanks lobbing shells at each other on a two dimensional landscape. Modern versions have lots more players, tons of different weapons, million and one other features. Back to the story, now.

Charr is the latest Artillery game from the maker of Artillerus, which I rather liked despite its various oddities but which he himself now describes as "slow, quirky, and not all that good".

Charr is still not exactly mercurial in play (what's your hurry? Watch the pretty projectiles!) and has a strong family resemblance to the older Artillerus (chunky ECS copper gradients, superwide scrolling screen), but features something never before seen in Artillery clones - modular weapons.

You see, Charr only has 26 weapons (not many for an Artillery game these days...), but you can string them together whichever way you like, any time you like. At the beginning of each firing turn, you buy the weapons you want - up to 10 - and select whether you want to fire them in a continuous bombardment, or have them all burst out of one shell in the air, or have them bounce in a number of ways, or have them dropped from the flying shell like bombs - you get the picture.

Weapons can go off on top of and around each other, producing strange and sometimes unpredictable results, and allowing you to build baroquely complex super-weapons.

This is rather cool. A big dirt remover, followed by a couple of

little blasts to dig further into the hill, then another remover, and so on, is an excellent mountain eater when you feel like showing the bad guys the meaning of gravity. A shower of a half dozen lavas deals swiftly with any poor unfortunate in a hole. A "bracketing" collection of dirt balls fired at a close-to-vertical angle builds a monster mountain. And so on.

Charr has plenty of points of similarity with Artillerus, including the easily changed sounds. It's good that you can replace the standard sounds with any other IFF format samples you happen to have (just copy them over the original sounds, using the same names), because the built in sounds, like those for Artillerus, suck.

There are irritating features, too. The computer opponents are still as dense as Homer Hudson Octuple Chocolate Chocolate Chip (Hey! Look! An opponent with no shield and 95% damage! I know - I'll hurl harmless dirt weapons at him!), and they still have infinite cash to make up for it, resulting in the occasional Holocaust From Nowhere and a million and one changes of shield in the course of the game.

Weapons still occasionally behave in unadvertised ways. The damage system is still arcane, seemingly inconsistent and completely undocumented, as is the financial system - it seems to cost money just to be there for a turn. But hey, mellow out. It's just a game. And with a few friends, it's a darn good one.

On the companion disks, naturally. You can get the abovementioned companion disks by calling Prime Artifax on 1800 252 879 and asking for HotPD 23. Only \$9.50 the pair. Do it now. Right now. You'll feel better. The voices will stop. Go on, it's so easy... □

AMIGA Review

1995

READER SURVEY

(CUT OUT OR PHOTOCOPY)

Hardware

- 500 600 1200
 3000 4000 CD32
 68020 68030 68040
 Hard drive
 Modem
 Printer
 Genlock
 Video Digitiser
 Sound Digitiser
 CD-ROM

Other

Total RAM(Mb)
 HARD DISK(Mb)

Main applications

List the programs you most like to use ...

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 2.....
 3.....
 4.....
 5.....

Optional

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I would like to subscribe for 12 issues - please bill me
 or charge my: MC VISA BC
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Other suggestions:

Would you be prepared to pay more per issue to keep acar going if things get tough?

- Maybe
 Yes
 No

Buying plans

Do you:

- Use a PC
 Own a PC
 Use a MAC
 Own a MAC
 Plan on buying a PC
 Use an emulator

The future

Will you stick with AMIGA

- Regardless
 For a while
 If positive outcome of sale on 21st April
 Until I can afford something else
 Uncertain
 No

Interests

Tick as many as you like!

- Animation
 3D Modelling
 AMOS
 Assembler
 Blitz Basic
 C
 CanDo
 Communications
 Databases
 Demos
 Desktop Publishing
 Games
 MIDI Music
 Painting/Graphics
 Sound/Music
 The Internet
 Video Editing
 Wordprocessing

Other

AMIGA REVIEW Suggestions

I like.....

 I love.....

 I hate.....

 Please can you

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troller, 512k SVGA graphics chip set), 40MB IDE
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ed. Neg. \$760 the lot. Contact Craig Arnoldt (054)
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\$10. Biblereader bible-on-disk, \$20. DUDE
dirutil,\$5. HPDeskjet printer drivers (3), \$10. I.E.
AGA icon editor, \$5. Amiga Vision Professional
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Wanted for Amiga 500. A set of WB2.1 manuals with or without disks. Anyone with set surplus to requirements please contact John on (071) 271 515.

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- Show Report - Vidi Amiga 12 - Final Copy II - Sound Digitising - Intro to Desktop Video - Hypercache Professional - Education - Aust Graphics Atlas - CanDo - DPaint Tutorial - C64 Column - Amos Column - Opal Paint's Zap function

☆ Hot PD - Games - Hired Guns, Trols, Graham Gooch World Class Cricket - Solution to SuperFrog Part 2.

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- Understanding Amiga Graphics - Computer images often require a compromise between quality and file size - we explain how to achieve the best balance - Modems - An introduction for Beginners - A modem can bring all kinds of information to your Amiga at a very reasonable cost - Up and Running - Making your modem work - trouble shooting and a checklist of what to do.

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☆ DTP Column, Creating forms in Pro Page - Hot PD - Online Amiga - Blitz Basic - C64 - Games - Liberation - Captive II, Skidmarks, Cliffhanger, Apocalypse, Legacy of Sorasil - CD32 Games, Surf Ninjas, Global Effect.

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☆ Columns - HotPD - DTP - Humorous - Online - CanDo - C64 - PowerDOS - AMOS - CD32.

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- Stepping up to CD-ROM, review of the NEC 3X triple speed drive - Piracy, Alive and Well - PAL Lightwave, Newtek's monster 3D rendering pack-

age is now available sans Toaster - SX-1 CD32 Expansion - Supra 28 Turbo, Supra 28Mhz 68000 accelerator gives you power without the price - DevCon Report.

☆ Columns - Hot PD - DTP - Online - CanDo - PowerDOS - Amos - CD32 - C Programming - Education.

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☆ Columns - HotPD - Blitz Basic - Online - Power DOS - C Programming - Games - Nick Faldo's Golf, Pirates, Impossible Mission 2025 "The special edition".

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- Brilliance 2.0, 24 bit painting without extra hardware - power to the people! - Disaster Recovery, when in trouble or in doubt, run in circles, scream and shout. Or read this. - Quark Express vs PageStream 3.0, How does the new kid on the Amiga DTP block stack up - Money Matters, a cash book for small business and home - G-Lock, GVP's software controlled genlock - Understanding Fonts - CD Roundup - Easy Ledgers, professional accounting.

☆ Columns - Blitz Basic - Online - AMOS - C64 C Programming - Games - JetStrike - Secrets of Frontier Elite Hintbook. Review of the Competition Pro Super CD32 Controller.

SPECIAL EDITION ANNUAL

January 95 Vol 12 No 1

- Lightwave Goodies, extra software finally in Australia - CEI Conference, hot from the Internet CEI boss Alex Amor speaks - Removeable storage shootout, comparison of the new Bernoulli and Fujitsu 230Mb drives - Magic Lantern - Surf the Net, Internet access with your Amiga.

☆ ANNUAL SPECIAL - Amiga

Dealer List - Amiga Service Centre List - Amiga BBS Listing - Fish Listing
☆ Columns - Online, DPaint, C64 - Games - Super StarDust Alien Breed Tower Assault, Cannon Fodder 2, Beau Jolly Pack including Cannon Fodder, The Chaos Engine, The Settlers, and T2: The Arcade Game. CD32 Banshee.

February 1995 Vol 12 No 2

- Amiga digital video, full digital video editing. - Workbench 3.1, latest version reviewed - PC-Task, Windows capable Amiga for \$129 - Deluxe Paint 5, a sneak preview - Personal Paint 6.0, and the Cloanto competitor! - CEI Conference II, Alex Amor speaks again!

☆ Dealer List update - Corrections and extensions to the January listing.

☆ Service Centre List - More corrections and extensions.

☆ Columns - Online - C64 - Hot PD - Demo Scene - AMOS - Blitz Basic - Power Amiga DOS

Games - Rocketz - Mr Blobby - The Clue! - Top Gear 2 - Marvins Marvelous Adventure - Rise of the Robots -

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- Datastore, a new wave in databases - Real 3D versus Lightwave, both compared - Internet, Cool places on the Web - Aura Interactor, get into your games - A570, Fitting a SCSI hard disk to the A570 CD-ROM - Wordworth 3.1, The latest version - CanDo 3.0, New Version - XCAD 3000, Professional CAD on the Amiga - Commodore Deathbed Vigil and A1200 Intro 2 reviewed. - Insight Dinosaurs, Insight Technology.

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pinball illusions

► As the grandiose super-show-off intro to this latest pinball game proclaims - first there was Pinball Dreams, then Pinball Fantasies, now Pinball Illusions (for about half a second you see a lovely logo containing a far sillier name). The exceedingly talented chaps at 21st Century Entertainment know when they're onto a good thing and have trotted out another in the series of spiffing pin-sims, AGA only and prettier than ever.

You may have missed Pinball Illusions' predecessors. Pinball Dreams was, at the time, the definitive home computer conversion of the mechanical entertainment experience, but it looked sparse and primitive next to Fantasies, which has had a similar number done on it by Illusions. They all feature very realistic ball behaviour, groovy graphics and high grade sound.

What's new?

Well, you get three all-new triple flipper tables - Law N Justice, Extreme Sports and Babe-watch, and they're definitely even prettier than Pinball Fantasies, which was itself most impressive. All of the graphics are beautifully drawn and scroll smoothly, and the fake pinball machine matrix display at the top has also had a steroid injection.

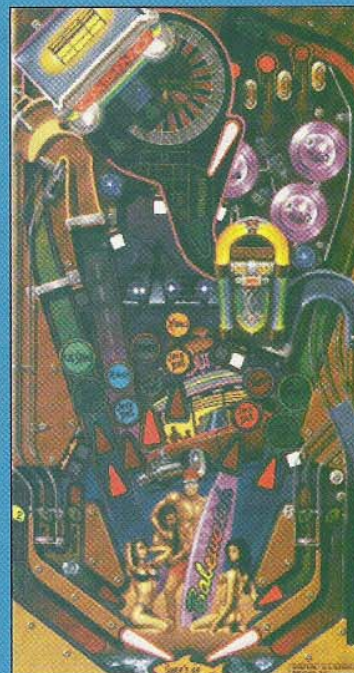
You can view the tables in the traditional low-res monster scrolling mode, which can get to be a pain when you're in multi-ball mode, or you can drop into interlaced jittervision, which shows

almost the whole table at half width - all the detail's still there, if harder to appreciate, and it doesn't run any slower.

Naturally there are bonuses galore, all of which are explained in detail in the manual. The tables aren't baroquely complex, yet they feature 17, 10 and 12 special modes and features respectively; escapees from Who rock operas are catered for.

You can have up to eight sequential players (and add players in during play, too) and you can bump the table up and from either side; naturally, pounding the table like a bongo drummer encourages a visit from the tilt bogeyman. There are a few annoying bits; the music changes when you're in different modes, but you can't turn it off, and you can still only enter plain three digit high score names. And there's no hard disk installer, though the disks are DOS so you might be able to work something up.

But this is just niggling. If you're a pin-sim freak, Illusions will be on your shopping list, as Dreams and Fantasies were in the past. If you've never bought a pinball simulation but like the idea, Illusions is the best so far and worth having. But if you've got Fantasies or even Dreams and find it just doesn't turn your crank, Illusions probably isn't for you. Face it - strange as it may seem, some people just don't like pinball. □



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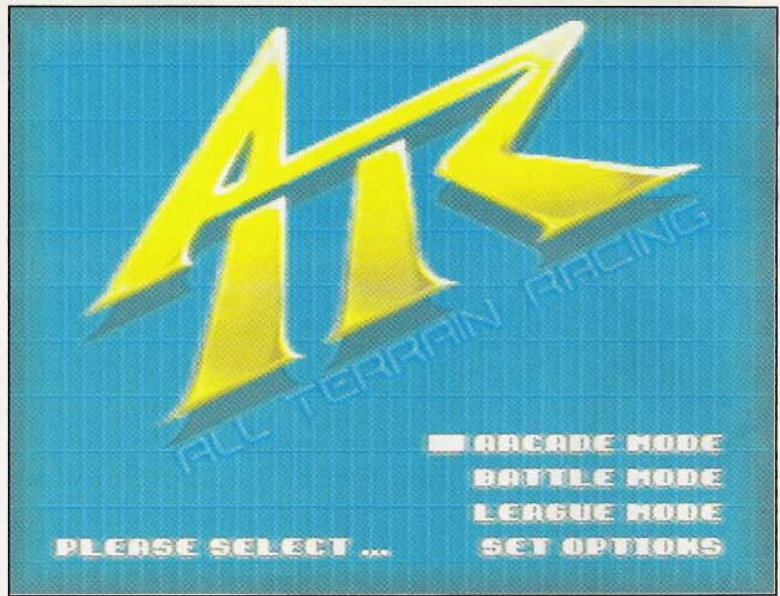
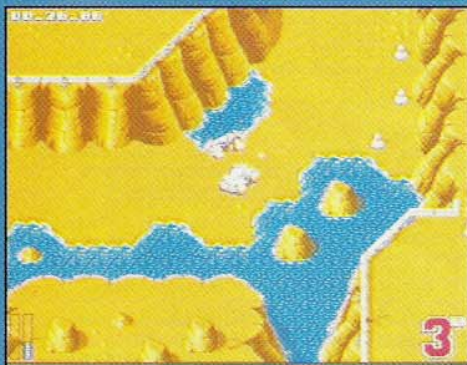
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I've always had time for a good top-down view racing game. All Terrain Racer is a top-downer, and a very nice one too.

From Team 17, purveyors of fine games for quite a while now, it's got smooth control, pretty but clear graphics, decent sound and plenty of options to keep you occupied. There are three flavours of track - racetrack, desert and arctic - and three flavours of car - jeep, buggy and racer.

You can improve your car's engine, gears, tyres and armour, and there are also bonuses to pick up on the track and special one-race boosters - the turbocharger, power steering and power braking.

Racing against the computer's amusing, with the computer opponents, as is traditional, getting better every race, but any game benefits from having the chance to beat your friends, and Team 17 know it.

The two-player race mode in ATR is of the unfriendly type. Not

only do you try to beat your buddy round the track, sideswipe him into obstacles and steal his bonuses, but there are occasional mine and missile bonuses lying around that let you give unto him some instant sunshine.

It's a one-screen, unsplit display for the two player game, with anyone that falls behind and off the screen yanked back up into contention, so you're in each others' faces all the time.

Gripes? Only one. The controls are misdescribed in the documentation, which caused me some confusion at first - but if you use the joystick controls with the gamepad and use the blue button to quit, you'll be right.

Aside from that, this is a class act all the way. Easy to get into, more than 40 tracks, highly playable and a challenging bash your buddy mode. What more could you want?

- DR

CD32 Jungle Strike

Built on the success of Sega and Nintendo series, Jungle Strike has you piloting a heavily armed Commanche gunship and numerous other vehicles, against terrorists and other nasties. Good graphics, okay sound, smooth animation and tough game play. Our review copy came from Computer Afair on (02) 417 5155. RRP is \$69.

- DR

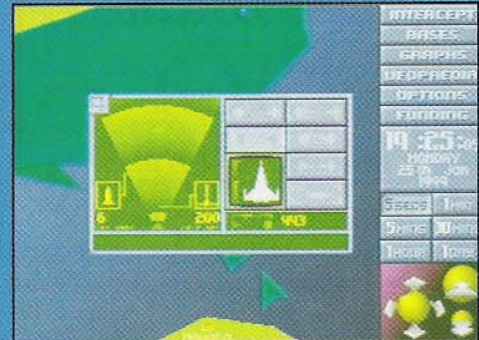




Distributed by Hotpoint
RRP \$69.95 - also available on CD32

CD32 Enemy Unknown

A strategy combat game similar to laser squad. You are XCom. You shoot down UFOs, kill or capturing the occupants, and stealing their technology if you can. The bughunting and blasting section of the game, its strategic core, is strongly reminiscent of Laser Squad - kit your guys out with guns, armour and grenades, send them into the field, tell them what to do one at a time, end your turn and see if any bad guys wander into your line of fire. The control system's got a lot of options, and is consequently not frightfully comfortable for CD32 owners wrestling with the dreaded gamepad. The strategy aspect to the game involves deployment of your forces. A successful campaign is rewarded with new technology. UFO has a sluggish feel and an awkward interface on a TV, and the odd programming glitch. Our review copy came from Amadeus - (02) 652 2712, RRP \$69. - DR

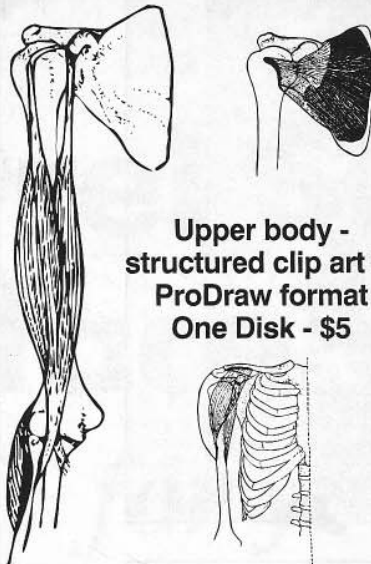


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Flexer® PD 2.0 ©1992-93 by Andrew Farnock

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Adams, Douglas	Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy, The	Guild Publishing	1986
Baum, L. Frank	Wizard of Oz, The	Mandarin Publishers Limited	1983
Berenson, Dick	Uncensored Boy's Own, The	Macdonald & Co (Publishers) Ltd	1980
Boardman, Tom Jr	Science Fiction Stories	Octopus Books Limited	1983
Burnel, Frances Hodgson	Secret Garden, The	Octopus Books Limited	1983
Carroll, Lewis	Alice's Adventures In Wonderland	Octopus Books Limited	1981
Clarke, Arthur C.	2010: Odyssey Two	Cranada Publishing Limited	1982
Clarke, Arthur C.	2001: Odyssey Three	Crafton Books	1989
Crichton, Michael	Jurassic Park	Random House	1991
Davis, Jim	Carfield: Here's Looking at You	Ravelle Books Limited	1985
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Davis, Jim	Carfield: We Love You Too	Ravelle Books Limited	1985
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Database II

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Workbench 2.x and 3.0

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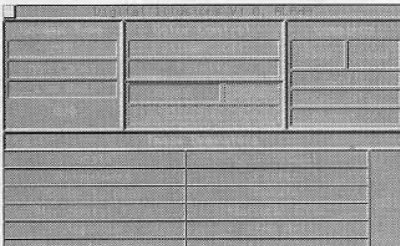
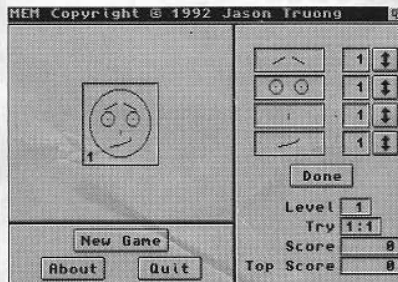


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Digital Illusions is fully functional and allows impress image processing and animation functions to be executed on IFF images. Powerful AdPro style interface. One disk. (HAMLAB demo inc. too)



Education #5

We now have a total of six disks of education software. Mem (a memory game - picture above) is from education #5 - one of five programs on the disk. Others include Maths Adventure, Division, Counting and Lemonade. Education 6 has an excellent puzzle game called OXYD.

NEW NEW NEW NEW NEW NEW
Workbench 3.0

NEW NEW NEW NEW NEW NEW

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- #8 - Asteroids, Bug Blaster, Microbe, Poing, Revenge of the Mutant Camels, Ring War, Trlx
- #9 - Pacman (brilliant copy of the original), OmegaRace, Columns, Nebula and POD.
- #10 - Donkey Kong, Galaga (the best!), Artillerus, Fleuch
- #11 - Scorched Tanks - the latest super version, 2-4 players.
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- Star Trek - The Game, with sound-FX, animation, point and click interface, various missions. 1Mb
- Balance of Power - Strategy game for one or two players. Control the world powers to avoid nuclear war.
- UCheSS - Chess game - Needs 4Mb and accelerator - Ideal for A1200 or 4000. AGA Support.

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- NCOMM 3.0 - Shareware AREXX, SCRIPTING, simple BBS mode.
- Term 3.4 - Freeware, scripting, powerful, 3 disks, hard drive req. WB2.x required.

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- Cartoon 3: Jugette, Jugette 2, Juggler 2
- Cartoon 4: F16 Combat, Stealthy Manover II
- Cartoon 5: Bigs Bunny
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- Education 1 - Elements, Draw Map, Rubik, Space Log, Gears
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- Education 3 - Word Puzzle, Crossword, Word Game, A-Solve, POWER LOGO!
- Education 4 - PlotMap - Two disk set - creates maps of world, save in IFF format.
- Hypertext - Create text files with links to animation, graphics, sounds, songs - anything (via AREXX). 1Mb & WB2.x required.
- Stockmarket Simulation - Buy and sell shares, take out a bank overdraft, and eventually qualify to joining the insiders club. Local program to simulate local conditions.
- Chemistry - Create 3D models of different molecules

Emulation

- Atari Emulator - German Only
- MS-DOS Emulator - PC-TASK (shareware-no write to disk) & Transformer. Run most MS-DOS business software.
- C64 Emulator - Run C64 Program, Interface C64 Peripherals (opt. interface available from U.S.A. Only)

Graphics and Animation

- Graphics 1 - Still Store: For sequencing stills for video production
- Graphics 2 - Mostra, ImageLab, TitleGen, sMovie, Abridge, SceneGenDemo, SlideMaster
- Graphics 3 - Icon-Editor, Turbo Title, Cyro-Animation Utilis
- Graphics 4 - FreePaint, Graffiti, PED, PicBase - IFF Database
- MandleBrot Tools - Six Disks, Create

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- MiniMorph - Create your own 16 grey-scale morphs. 1Mb
- AGA Demos 1 - HOIS-AGA and AGA- Amiga Boing.
- Mobile! - By Spaceballs - 3D Animation, A1200 and 3000 compatible.
- AGA Images - Six disks of hot AGA picsies including 3D rendered in Aladdin, and photos.
- Imagine Objects 1 - Enterprise, Chess Pieces, Amiga 3000.

Music and Sound

- Med 3.1 - The best Amiga low-level sequencer - some MIDI support
- Sound Tools - Play, edit, arrange, distort and create IFF sound samples
- Sound FX 1 - Filled with short, sweet sound samples - Bells, Horns, Sweets..
- Remix 1 - Two remixed music samples - Madonna and Black Box
- Tracks 1 - 1733, Aggression, Angies, Arkenoid, Atmospheric, AxelF, Azeirev
- Tracks 2 - Beat, Benny, Blochall, Blochall2, Blue Days, Blue Moon, Boss, Call Me, T.C.S.
- Tracks 3 - Cloud Song, Creation 2, Crockets, Ear, Electric Dreams, Last Ninja II, Megaforce, Metal Synth
- Tracks 4 - Oxygene, Piano-Plink, PopCorn, RSI-Hard, Skylight, Smoke, SupeBASIC, Tocatta
- Tracks 5 - BalDance, Bond, Fresh House, Lambda, Pawnl, WasteLand
- Movie Samples - 9 Disks of IFF "Make My Day" style samples (Tracks 6-23 also available now.)

Improve Your Workbench

- AGA Utilities 1 - AGA Anim players, picture showers, AGA disable, GIF

shower and more.

- WB1.3 Superdisk - Bootable, ready-to-run. Read/Write MS-DOS disks, DIRWORK file manager, AutoCLI WB Enhancer, includes Documentation on disk.
- WB2.x Enhancer - Icons, Presets, NAG program for appointments, Fractal Screen Blanker, KCommodity: Auto window activation, Clock/Memory usage, Keystroke Audible Click, Gadgetless window closing, Hotkey, Mouse accelerator and much more.
- AntiVirus - Latest protection using BOOTX, Tutorial on Virus Protection and more
- Hacker - Rip music from games, create custom boot blocks, look for secret messages on disks
- DOS Utilities III - All the latest PD Utilities to organise your disks
- MS-DOS Utilities - READ/WRITE and FORMAT 720K MS-DOS Disks!
- Hard Disk Utilities 1 - HD Backup, Alock security, Undelete, Disk editor, mark out bad blocks, alter your boot logo, find misplaced files and HDMem.
- Parbench - Network two Amigas via a special Parallel cable. Ideal for CDTV owners to use as a CD-ROM drive.

Programming

- ACE AmigaBASIC Compiler 1.1 - Speed up your BASIC programs into fast executable binary. Includes linker and assembler.
- Pascal - Two disks, PASCAL includes PCQ compiler, A68K, Blink, Debugger, Mon, examples and PCQ source.

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A different view of databases

a look at Final Data

By Owen James

Like Dastore, the other new database program I reviewed recently, Softwood's Final Data redefines the user interface for database managers. Gone are the familiar blocks of aligned text and movement buttons, characteristic of database software since the release of Superbase. You won't even find many similarities with Dastore. Final Data takes yet another new approach to its interface which looks, well, curiously similar to another kind of application.

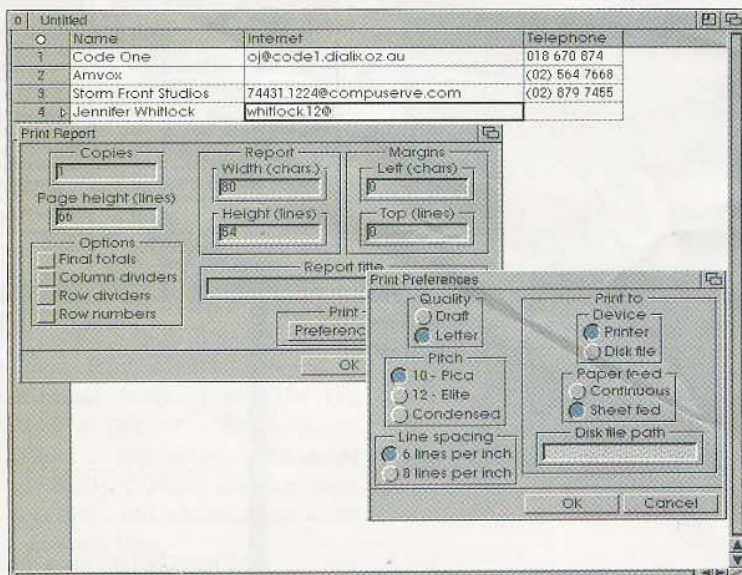
On launching Final Data, you could be forgiven for thinking

you've started a spreadsheet program. There's the familiar array of column titles along the top and row numbers down the side. Yes, this is certainly the interface of a spreadsheet.

Each record is actually a separate row along the screen. In the classic mailing list example, "Cell" A1 would be the surname, B1 a first name, C1 the address and so on. Clicking the column title highlights the entire column, clicking a row title highlights the row. But unlike a spreadsheet, you can't just begin entering data straight away.

Defining a database in Final Data is fairly painless, thanks to a very intuitive requester. This is where you tell Final Data the type of information you wish to record, and how you'd like it handled. Names and addresses are plain text fields, but other columns may contain dollar amounts, dates, times and even calculations. Beyond these simple categories you've got even greater flexibility to define the type of currency to use, how many decimal places to round down to, whether to accept letters, numbers, or both, and even whether you'd like times to be entered in 12 hour format but displayed in 24 hour format.

Defining a column as containing calculations gives you the opportunity to pull in and manipulate data from other parts of your database. This could be something simple like recording how much a client owes at the current level and the 30-days level, with a third column automatically adding these to produce a total. Or it could be something more complex, like deciding the amount of fuel the space shuttle will use up based on the distance value from one column and the payload weight from another. This isn't as flexible or easy as a real spreadsheet program, but



it allows plenty of scope for managing a database.

Entering data is relatively simple - click on a cell and start typing. As soon as you're at the end of one row, it'll loop back and create a new one to allow you to seamlessly continue entering data. Editing is a breeze; just click on or move with the cursor keys to any cell from the current record, or any other record, to change its contents. There's no need to enter any special editing mode. There's the potential for errors if you're not paying attention to where the cursor is before you start typing, but it's an easy system to use.

Once data is entered, it's very easy to cut and paste between records, or even files. Much like a word processor, you simply highlight the data you'd like to cut, copy, edit or move.

Searching for records is relatively fast, even without using the Search function. It's easy to visually scan down the records, especially when they're sorted. The Search function is still very useful, with further options including search just one column and wrap around (search from the current cell down, and then start again from the top). There's a handy Replace function too - tell Final Data what you're looking for and what you'd like it changed to, and let it do the rest.

Sorting is another option with curious flexibility. As you'd expect, you can sort data either ascending or descending based on a particular field (column), but Final Data also allows you to sort the data in rows. This allows you to sort on non-adjacent columns or multiple columns, each of which may have different sorting criteria.

To be of any use, a database must be able to produce useful output. For a mailing list this may be labels, for a stock inventory this may be a printed report.

Printing problems

A report looks similar to what you see on screen. Data is arranged in rows and columns, and as many columns will print as your printer will allow. This can be a problem if your database requires many fields or just very wide columns, as you may not be able to print the entire report. A little more flexibility here could avoid some problems. Label output compensates for some of the reports' shortcomings. There's a lot more flexibility here; you can set the amount of labels across and down per page, label width and height, which columns to output and the layout of the columns on the label.

ARexx integration

There's an ARexx port and a comprehensive set of commands, a very welcome addition. The ARexx commands let you produce macros and easily integrate Final Data with other applications. You can create an entire database based on data from another application, or pull data out of an existing database, manipulate it, and paste it into something like Professional Page or a spreadsheet program. This is an extremely useful feature; if you're not presently versed in

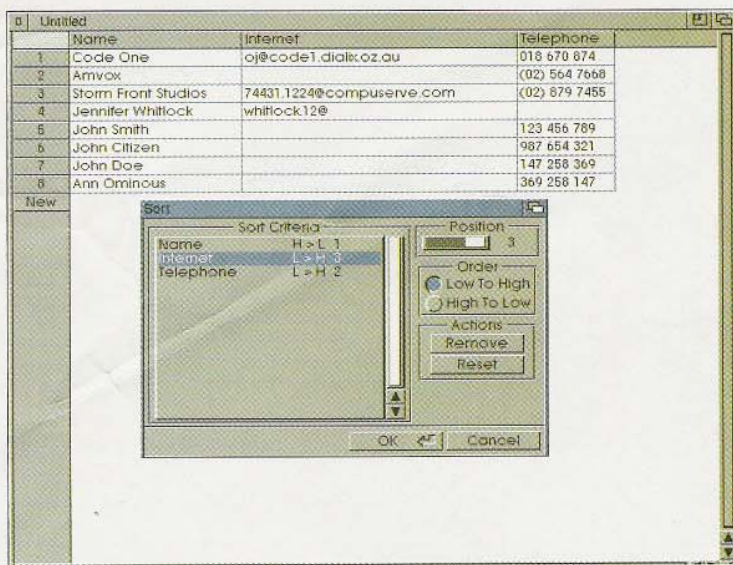
ARexx, this may be enough to make you want to start learning.

What is there not to like about Final Data? Very little. The interface may be unusual but it's still very comfortable. The only major fault of is that if you create a file with many fields, each record stretches horizontally past the edge of the screen. It's awkward not being able to see the entire record at once time, and this also requires some pre-planning when printing reports.

Unlike many other database packages, there's no option for including special data. There's no way of incorporating digitised photographs or sounds.

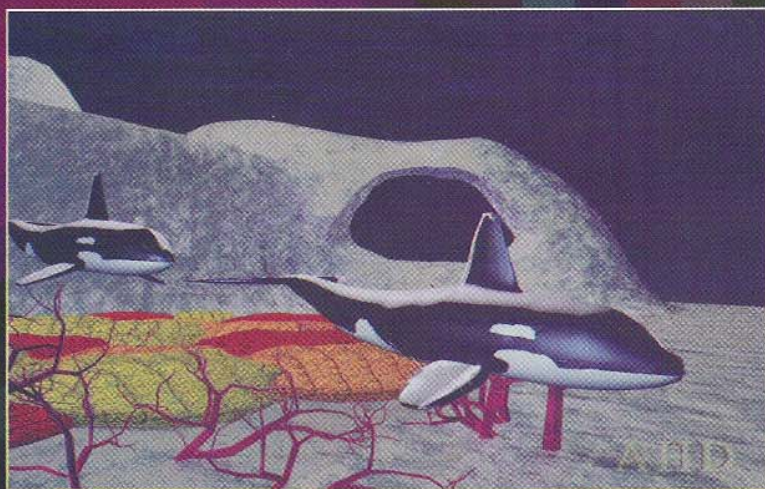
These problems aside, Final Data is a useful, easy to use piece of software. It has borrowed some of the best parts from various other applications, including word processors and spreadsheets, but this is A Good Thing. Users of other Softwood software will feel very comfortable with the interface, and recognise almost all of the requesters immediately.

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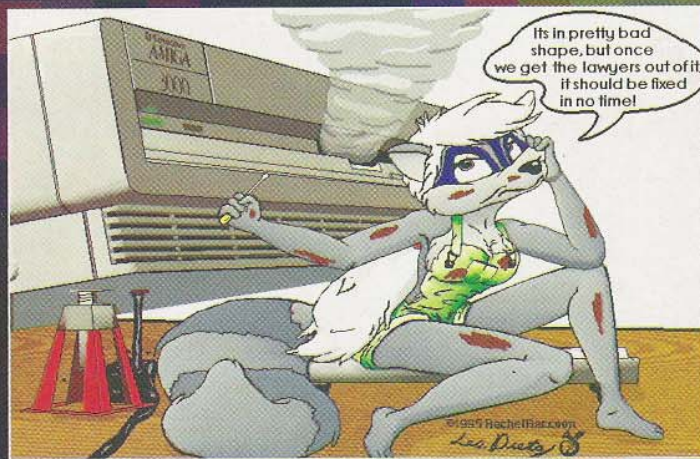
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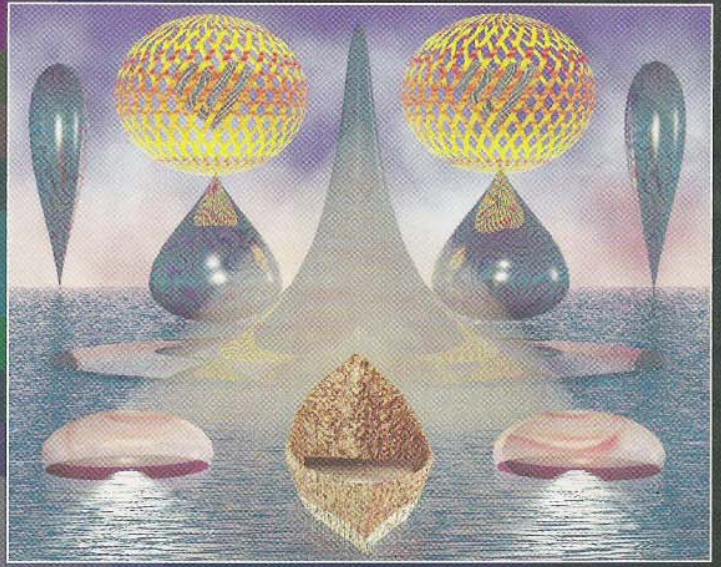
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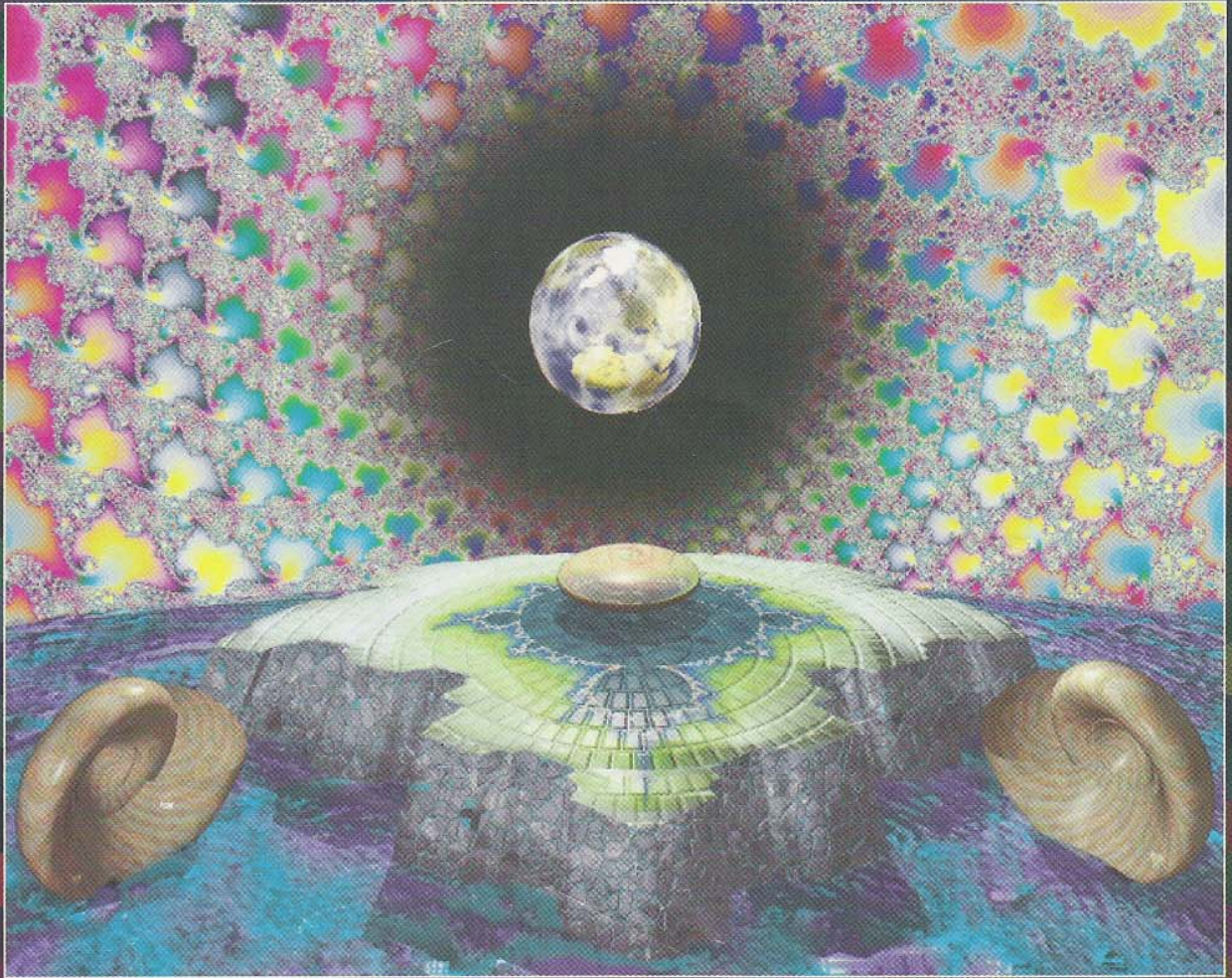
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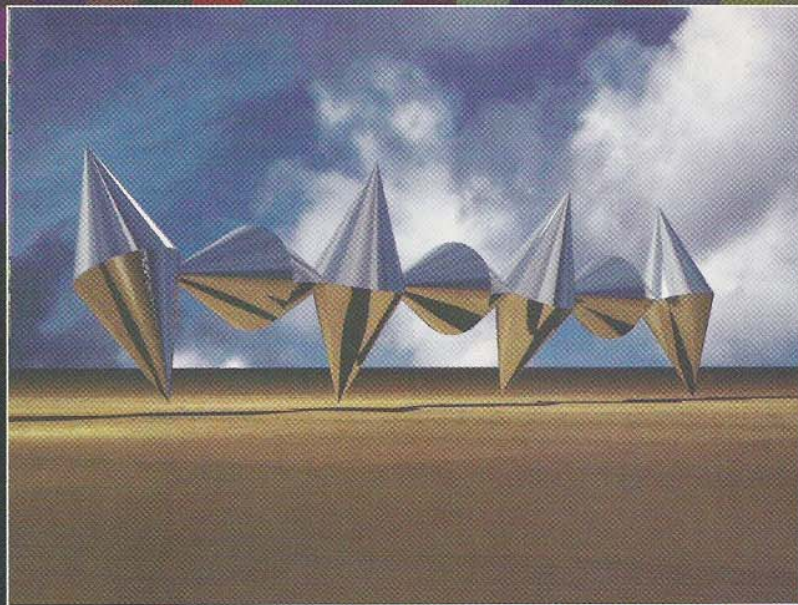
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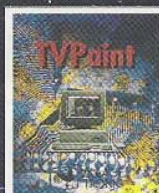
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