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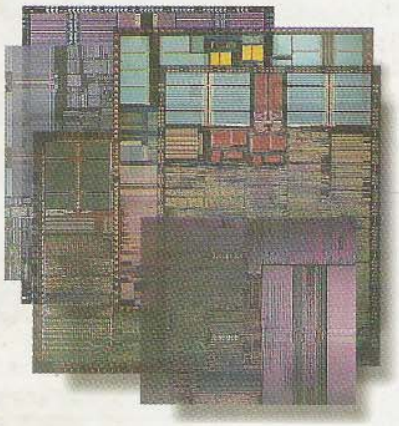

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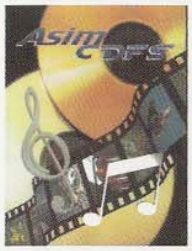

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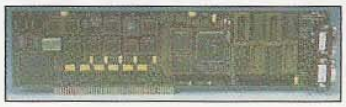

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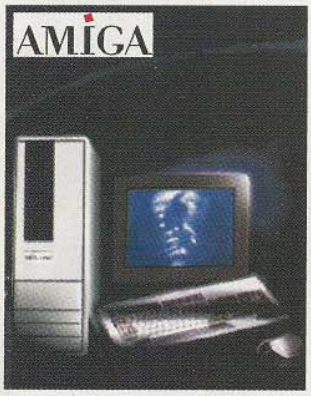

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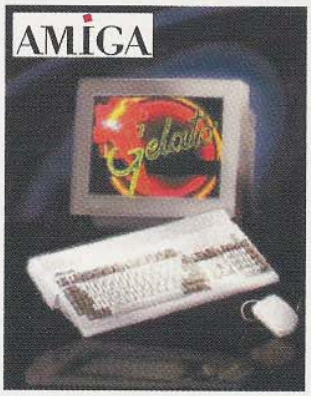

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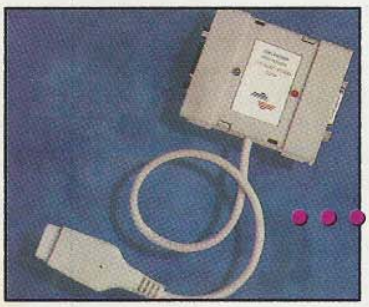

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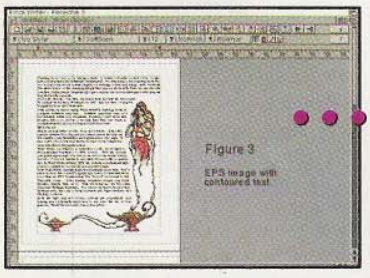

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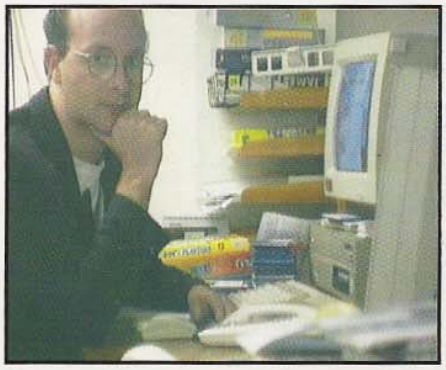
Powering along

Debate over the new PowerPC, or Power Amiga if you prefer, future that has been announced in recent weeks is keeping electronic discussion forums full the world over. Is this a move away from the Amiga philosophy we've come to enjoy so much? Would a PowerPC based machine be just another "me too" offering?

When the Amiga was launched in Australia in 1985, it offered features people were not expecting. It did things we had not dreamed of. The Amiga was truly ground breaking stuff. Much of this was made possible by the completely new design - new custom chips, a brand new operating system, a whole new way of building a desktop computer.

Custom chips took away from the Amiga's CPU a lot of serious processing that was slowing down competing brands. Since then, many other computers makers have recognised the value of this strategy and have adopted a similar, albeit not as elegant equivalent.

What we need is the same again, please. It is this sort of revolution that could put Amiga Technologies back at the forefront of innovation. MPEG play back, a polygon graphics engine, 16-bit sound - all the sorts of things PCs are adding by way of plug in cards - could be put on the motherboard. Consolidate chips to do it, design new ones if you have to - that's what they did the first time around. This time, the pressure is on.



Right now, it's still unclear whether such a ground-breaking new Amiga is likely or even possible. In fact, the toughest call may not be the next Amiga - but keeping the hangers on hanging on for another year using the current technology. What would make us all stay? What would keep you here reading Amiga Review every month, and investing more time and money in your Amiga system?

Better software and better performance at a better price. Can it be delivered? Amiga Technologies are slowly winning the trust of loyal Amigans. If they can deliver, it's likely they will keep - and win back - many Amiga users who are not interested in moving to a PC. Yes, PCs are a lot better than they use to be. However, they're still seriously troubled by hardware constraints that will become more and more burdensome as we move into the age of multimedia in earnest.

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Better Postscript support

◗ The Amiga Typeface Engine (ATE) is a freeware product that lets any application using AmigaDOS to draw text to use Postscript typefaces like any other Amiga font. ATE draws fonts character by character on demand, to improve performance and make it usable on 68000 systems. Nonetheless, a 68020/68881 combination or better is recommended. It's on Aminet; look for a review soon!

Wordworth 5 shapes up

The next version of the popular Wordworth word processor is slated for release in January 1996. There are a pile of new features - drag and drop style sheets, several default style sheets, internal support for HP LaserJet printers, background printing, faster operation, clipboard support, easy transferral of paragraph formatting, the ability to turn paragraphs into bullet point items, hanging indents, snap to grid, better tables, and footnotes at the ends of pages or the ends of documents.

The font engine's been improved, with stretch, positive and negative oblique, small caps, strike-through, double underlining and smaller super/subscript.

Wordworth 5 will allow importing of 24 bit pictures, and there will be Wizards to guide you through the program. Power users should appreciate the 150 command ARexx port.

Contact Amadeus Computers on (02) 651 1711 for more information.

Portable Amigas

◗ Silent Paw Productions, the people who have been talking about the Portable Amiga WorkStation (PAWS) product for rather a while now, seem set to actually release something Real Soon Now.

The PAWS is not, as shipped, a whole Amiga laptop - it's a metal box and interface kit into which someone else - you or a dealer - puts an A600, A1200, A3000 or A4000 motherboard. It comes with an active matrix colour LCD screen, which contributes to the expected $US3000 or so release price.

The result is a mains or battery (standard Duracell rechargeable) powered, LCD screened, trackball operated portable Amiga, with all slots accessible (including PCMCIA). And the case is black, hence making it faster.

A much cheaper greyscale screen version is under consideration, but the large reduction in the cost of the screen (maybe a third the price of the $US2000 colour units) would be strongly offset by the expense involved in making an interface board for it.

Also in the pipeline from Silent Paw is the Gecko Amiga to VGA adaptor, which allows you to use cheap PC monitors from Amiga RGB output in most graphic modes. They've also got a shelved project for a proper integrated Amiga laptop called the Puma, whose development depends on Amiga Technologies' degree of cooperation. A less power-hungry Amiga chipset is a priority - the present Paws running a 68030 Amiga gives about 75 minutes battery life, and the PAWS 4000 model can't be battery powered.

No local distributor has been announced.

Incorruptible disks - Faster DOS!

◗ Intangible Assets Manufacturing have announced a new disk system which promises to end the pain of corrupted drives forever.

Ami-FileSafe (AFS) is a filesystem, like FastFileSystem, but it's billed as faster and more secure - AFS is ALWAYS validated, so no matter what crashes or which cables get pulled the drive will never have to atempt to revalidate itself.

There are two versions of AFS, a $US40 consumer one limited to one sub-650Mb drive, and a $US99.95 professional version for drives up to 9Gb with multi-user security.

Contact Intangible Asset's local distributor on (09) 271 0624 for more information, or view their website at http://www.iam.com.

Easy Internet

◗ Also from Intangible Assets is a suite of eight disks accompanyign their lengthily titled book "Connect Your Amiga! A Guide to the Internet, LANs, BBSs and Online Services". The disks, themselves descriptively named "Eight Freely Redistributable Disks to Connect Your Amiga!", contain all the files you'll need to get going in Amiga comms - terminal programs, Internet programs (TCP/IP, SLIP, PPP, Web, etc.), virus checkers, compression utilities and more. The pack retails for $US49.95; contact Intangible Assets locally on (09) 271 0624 for more information.

Mighty Midget from Canon

Computer video (and ordinary video, for that matter) fans should be salivating over Canon's new UC-X2Hi Hi-8 camera, which follows and improves on the already excellent UC-X1Hi.

The handycam-sized unit packs serious professional features, while still being useful for domestic applications, with a simple auto-everything mode. Heading the list of features is an extraordinary 20x optical zoom, with a smoothly applied 2x digital zoom on top of that. To keep things stable at high zooms and in difficult situations, the camera boasts Canon's optical image stabilisation system, a mechanical vibration reducer that works remarkably well.

Canon's Robocop-esque eye-tracking viewfinder system, which lets you set the autofocus on any part of the image simply by looking around the colour viewfinder, has been extended so you can trigger various functions by looking at a viewfinder corner.

A LAN-C editing port, timecode, hi-fi stereo sound, lots of effects and six exposure modes, including the stuttery but very useful low light mode, put the UC-X2Hi right up there with the best in the market. In case you missed it - we like it.

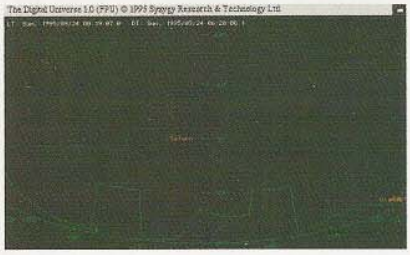
The price? A hefty $3699 suggested retail, but less on the street. Contact Canon on (02) 805 2000 for more information.

Digital Universe beats Distant Suns

The new frontrunner in the Amiga astronomy program stakes is The Digital Universe, billed as "a complete astronomy program for the amateur or professional observer."

The Digital Universe combines Distant Suns-style digital planetarium features with a 700 page hypertext astronomical encyclopedia with more than 250 pictures.

It has a vast object database of everything from galaxies to artificial satellites, compiled from eight respected star catalogues, and can generate accurate views of the night sky for any date from 100,000 BC to 100,000 AD, with or without precession, proper motion, nutation, aberration, or refraction. You can even generate IFF animations of object behaviour over time.



The Digital Universe requires Workbench 2, 3Mb RAM and at least 11Mb of hard drive space - and, preferably, a fast processor and maths coprocessor.

No local distributor has yet been announced; you can contact Syzygy Research and Technology Ltd in Canada on (403) 961-2213, email sales@syz.com, WWW http://www.syz.com. RRP about $US150.

CORRECTION

What were we thinking? In last month's comparison of Windows 95 and AmigaDOS we stated, erroneously, that AmigaDOS was a 16 bit operating system.

AmigaDOS is, of course, 32 bit, and has been since the Amiga's initial release. Sure, the 68000 was only 32 bit internally with a 16 bit data bus and 24 bit memory addressing, and all pre-A3000 machines had 16 bit communication with the custom chips, but the OS was 32 bit through and through, and the first such OS on any PC. Sorry about that.

Oh, and we also said that the Workbench Information window doesn't multitask. On pre-OS3 machines, that's true. For AmigaDOS 3 and up, though, it isn't.

Smart alec

Jay Cooper e-mailed us to tell us that he "spotted" the fact that we still had the old ACAR logo, with "Commodore" in it, on the editorial page in August.

Since we had it in September too and probably still do, we hereby declare it the Amiga Review Nostalgia Corner until such time as we remember to fix it. And you certainly DON'T get a free sub, Jay. Thank you for asking.

Jet engines

A spotting that fell down a crack and was only recently rediscovered (sorry about that...) came from Stephen Edwards of Qantas, who was watching a video about the no doubt fascinating JT9D-7R4E Bleed system, and noticed a Workbench 2 A2000 being used at the Pratt and Whitney training school for video presentations and video construction, not to mention considerable Amiga animation.

Puke-cam

Ali Farhat of Punchbowl, NSW recently visited Australia's Wonderland, and saw a Commodore 1084S monitor in use at a photo booth where they snap pics of screaming riders of the roller-coaster. He also thought he'd increase his chances of a free sub by mentioning an Amiga playing the Three Stooges game in Lethal Weapon 3 - sorry Ali, but Mel's playing with a Mac just before the scar-comparison scene.

Ali then mentioned an A500 on Beyond 2000 being used to help mentally disabled people, but we've said it before and we'll say it again; one dud spotting kills your chances. Sorry.

Super spottings

King of the spottings for this month was Ashley Bryant, who decided to go for quantity and sent in 15 of 'em. We'd had some before - the Beyond 2000 laser-ads-on-buildings one, the SBS Bits & Bytes mentions, the ABC/s Acme School of Stuff (WHY do so many spotters watch ABC kids' TV?), NASA's Amigas communicating with satellites and the 1084 surveillance monitor on the movie The Feds.

But Ashley had many, many more. An ad for Who magazine in Time magazine that featured child prodigy guitarist Nathan Cavaleri in the foreground and a much more interesting A600 in the background.

A local news broadcast about schools and computers with a quick flash of a 1084-equipped 2000 with the KS1.3 hand screen up.

A similar subliminal Amiga screen on a The Times story on hackers.

A (get this) Mega Fun With Computers Show at the Geelong Wool Museum (hey, where else?!), in association with a Fun With Health Thingy (this is what he said, OK?). One of the computers crashed and reset, giving the game away; the owner explained that there were "mainly 2000s, a few 500s and even a couple of 1000s" involved, in various nifty applications - touch screen sound sample sequencing, touch screen animated jigsaws, digitising video and compositing with computer images, a giant joystick and a maze-solver hooked up to a treadmill or exercise bike. We've obviously been spending too much time away from our local Wool Museum.

Bruce Sterling's excellent book "The Hacker Crackdown" contains, among other things, an Amiga reference - then-Assistant Attorney General of Arizona Gail Thackeray's dream machine in about 1990 was an A2000 with bridgeboard and Mac emulation, because all of the hackers were using them and without one most of the seized evidence disks weren't readable. A little later Sterling says Amiga when he probably means Amstrad, and renders a passage rather confusing, but that's not Ashley's fault.

The spottings go on. In an 88/89 Beyond 2000 rerun, a piece on indoor horse racing with robot jockeys (I remember that one - they were little ponies) - the unbribeable robots were radio-controlled and monitored by a C64.

In The Brittas Empire on the ABC, Chris Barrie's odious Arnold-Rimmer-gone-mad character has an A2000 in the corner of his office.

In The Gods Must Be Crazy II there's a spreadsheet running on a 2000 at the beginning, with that machine hooked up to an A500 in the room behind.

A ten minute show called Australia In Profile on the Federal Police features a DirOpus-running A2000 behind an officer talking about computer hacking.

An Open Learning program on astronomy featured an A2000 controlling a radio telescope.

And, on top of all these, Ashley didn't actually ask for a free subscription. Ah, what the heck - he's got one. And a free plug, too; apparently Ashley's the secretary of Warrnambool UFO Investigations; if your car's ever stalled in a flash of light on a remote highway or there's something implanted in your neck that confuses airport metal detectors, contact Mr J. K., Groves on (055) 615 676.

Blimey. We'll be doing lost dog notices next.

❑

Send your Media Watch sightinfs to Daniel Rutter, c/o P.O. Box 278 Camperdown, 2050 NSW.

High density *on the cheap*

By Daniel Rutter

It is a point of continuing shame for Amiga owners that, generally speaking, high density disks and Amigas don't mix. Sure, you can get high density drives for Amigas, and sure, A4000s came with them (though the A4000Ts currently being made don't have them), but the vast bulk of the world's Amigas are double density only.

Why? Glad you asked. Amiga high density drives are not like PC high density drives - you can't just plug in a $70 PC drive mechanism. Amiga HD drives have to operate at the same data transfer rate as the standard double density drives, because the Amiga disk drive controller can't do any better, and they must therefore spin at half speed to connect without extra adaptor hardware.

The only drive mechanism that actually spins this slow was made specially for Commodore by Chinon in far smaller numbers and at rather higher prices than the more popular standard PC drives. Amiga high density drive makers could use standard mechanisms, but only with extra hardware; these two strategies explained the stratospheric price of Amiga high density floppy drives - at around the $300 mark, they were double the price of a standard double density external drive.

But those days are gone - you can now get a sleek, functional Amiga external high density floppy drive for $199. There's just one minor detail - it's made by Dell, well-known purveyors of PC hardware. Get over it.

The drive in question's made as an external floppy for Dell laptops, but with the aid of a special cable (included, of course) you can plug it into your Amiga.

Installation

The connector at the back of the drive is a flat unkeyed edge type, which means it's possible to plug this end of the hookup cable in the wrong way around (the other end is, of course, a standard non-reversible 23 pin Amiga floppy connector). Inverting the cable won't hurt anything, but will make your machine imitate the vegetable of your choice until you swap it back again.

Once connected, users of AGA machines will immediately be in business; ECS Amigans will have to run a patch program, such as HDFixer, to be able to alternate disk formats without rebooting. Curiously, the machine on which I'm typing this (an elderly A2500) refused to work with the Dell drive and high density disks, despite working with the DKB high density drive normally connected to it and also being fine with the Dell drive and regular double density floppies. I wouldn't put too much stock in this, though, as this machine's floppy controller is prone to peculiar behaviour - hanging during dual-drive accessing, for example - anyway. Every other machine I tried worked fine.

Ease of use

Because this is a drive for laptops, it's designed to be small, light and hard to break. The small and light part is, of course, fine, but the hard to break part means there's no projecting disk eject button, but instead a slider thingy at the front right of the drive, which needs quite a push to pop out a disk. It's far from a crippling ergonomic

flaw, but it's the only one I found so I'm telling you, OK?

There's also no daisychain connector at the back of the drive, so it'll have to be at the end of your drive chain. Again, this is no big deal - unless you want to set up a four-HD-drive disk duplicating machine. There's also no disable switch - but since only a very few ancient games actually need external drives to be turned off and most people aren't concerned about the 30k or so of RAM they gain for each device disabled, this is also not important.

Performance

Speedwise, no Amiga floppy drives are anything to write home about, and this one's no exception. 23 kilobytes per second on reads, at a generous estimate, with a following wind. It's the hardware. What can you do.

Read and write speeds for MS-DOS and Mac format disks via CrossDOS and CrossMac are, as usual, lousy, which again is not this drive's fault. If you're used to C64 floppies, you'll think it's really fast. Think of it that way.

Overall

Every home should have one. If you've got a decent Amiga, particularly a CrossDOS-equipped MS-DOS disk reader, you really should have a high density drive to avoid all that cringing. For $50 or so more than a regular double density external, you can't go wrong. And it looks cool, too. Go buy one.

Contact Natdisc on
(02) 544 1874. RRP $199.

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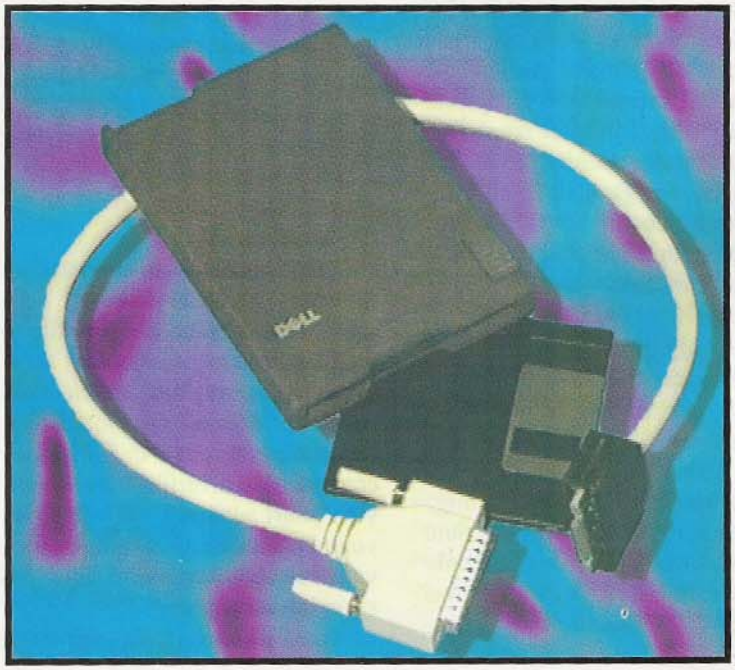
Right: *Solid construction, high density and a good price.*

How to read/write/format MS-DOS disks on your Workbench 2.x or better equipped Amiga

1. Open your Workbench drive.
2. Open the drawer called storage.
3. Open the drawer called DOS drivers.
4. You should see an icon called PC0 or PC1.
5. Select the icon and choose information from the icons pull down menu (or press Right-Amiga-I)
6. In the information window, below the default tools is a list of start options. Check the unit number corresponds with the drive unit number you wish to read MS-DOS disks from. (If this is your internal floppy drive, it should be 0. On an Amiga 2000, 3000 or 4000, an external floppy drive is normally 2, on A500, 600 or 1200 it will be 1.)
7. Once you've set the unit number, SAVE the settings.
8. To mount the drive just double click the device icon.
9. If you want the driver to mount every time you start your machine, drag the device icon onto your desktop.
8. Close the DOSDrivers and Storage windows. Open the DEVS drawer and open the DOSDrivers drawer in there.
9. Drag the device icon into this drawer. Now it will automatically mount every time you start Workbench.
10. To access the device, use PC0 or 1 or 2, depending on the unit number you selected. From the Workbench look for the PCx icon. You can read, write and format a PCx disk just like an Amiga disk.
11. File names will automatically be truncated to IBM 8.3 character format.
12. MS-DOS disks hold 720K in double density drives, and 1.4Mb on high density drives.



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H.44425 4 way Data Sw/Box $45
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C.92384 9M - 23F 1084S $29
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C.15215 15DM-15DF XTN $35
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C.50925 50MCen-25MD $19
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Software Review

Pagestream

Faster, but not finished

By Andrew Farrell

Pagestream 3.0 has been plugging along for what has seemed like an eternity. We've patiently installed each upgrade, jumped immediately to the open file menu, and selected a recent Professional Page file. What failed miserably in the first release, now loads merrily. What took ages in later updates, is now much faster. However, most of the ads in this magazine contain something that caused the final screen displayed after the import process to contain little more than a large black image with some barely visible boxes.

The latest release, 3.0h2, is many times faster in some areas - especially loading graphics. However there are still features missing and a number of very slow function that have meant we've had to stick with the considerably older Professional Page 4.1. This is very frustrating, because on specifications alone, Pagestream looks set to rock the Amiga DTP world. On specifications it could even compete strongly with heavy weight titles on the PC and Macintosh.

However, the performance is sadly lacking at the moment. SoftLogik are still promising more speed improvements, and I believe they will deliver. Judging by the constant improvements we've observed over recent months, you have to admit these guys have the best of intentions and the staying power to match.

For your enlightenment, we've reproduced an interesting list from the latest readme file here so you can get an idea of where things are at.

UNIMPLEMENTED FEATURES:

- Append
- Plate Control
- Find/Replace
- Spell Check, Lookup
- Layout Information
- Facing Pages
- Greek Text
- Text stroke not done to screen/non-PostScript (including Outline)
- Conditional Break
- Object Information
- Trapping
- Text Anchor
- Settings/Typographic
- Settings/Edit Hyphenation
- Settings/Edit Kerning
- Settings/Page palette (Only shows page icons so far.)
- Pen tool (Can only draw basic line segments so far.)
- Reshape tool
- Edit multiple objects with the Edit palette and Object/Edit
- Misc: Fencing, Drop Caps, Widow/Orphan, bitmap fills to screen/non-PS, multiple strokes, Auto Backup, All/In Use toggles, Undo for most Object features.

KNOWN PROBLEMS:

- You cannot apply colors to text using the Color Palette.
- You cannot customize a type style's color/line/fill attributes within a style tag.
- The Word, WordPerfect, Illustrator EPS and Freehand EPS filters are not complete. They work to a limited degree but don't support all attributes or file versions.
- You can't copy and paste (or duplicate/transform) text frames.
- Resizing rotated objects does not work as expected.
- Rotated text does not work properly.

- Typing past the end of a frame will not advance the cursor to the next frame if the next frame is on another page.
- Spot colors are separated as process colors. Color seps are not very good yet.
- Applied bold and italics aren't done for all font types yet.
- Fonts are not uncached when memory is low, and the program can crash if there isn't sufficient memory to load a font.
- Arrowheads cannot be printed with this version, even though they did print in 3.0h. This is due to work in progress, sorry.
- Only pictures should be left external at this time.
- You can't drag in the Document Structure palette yet. Click on the icons to create a chapter or masterpage.

Add ons

There's plenty of extras rolling out for Pagestream 3.0. The latest is a TextFX Extension (US$50, or US$40 if you own Art Expression). It offers warp text in shapes, bend text on curves, and convert text to graphics and is available now. The TrueType Font Engine is an extra US$25). A document filter for Wordworth (US$20) lets you open entire Wordworth3.1 documents in PageStream3, retaining pictures, text, endnotes, headers, footers and objects but not text effects.

Gary's Effects (US$25) provides twelve new effects for PageStream3's BME2, including Convolve, Blur, Histogram, Gamma, Average, and Threshold. Home and Office Forms (US$20) supplies 50 templates for the home, school and office. All encouraging stuff - and I'll be a lot more excited the moment the text editing gets fast!

Mac and Windows versions - coming soon, right!

PageStream3 for Macintosh is scheduled for a December 1995 release. Accord to Soft-Logik, versions will be available for both Macintosh and Power Macintosh. PageStream3 for Windows 95 is scheduled for a summer 1996 release.

Well, that's what they say. But, you might say these guys have a bit of a reputation for taking their time. Nevertheless, hats off to Soft-Logik for spreading their wings - even if they do think their program will run in 8Mb on Windows 95 (are you serious, guys?).

If you want more information than local suppliers can provide, here's the contact details.

I normally reach them through CompuServe and find the response times pretty good.

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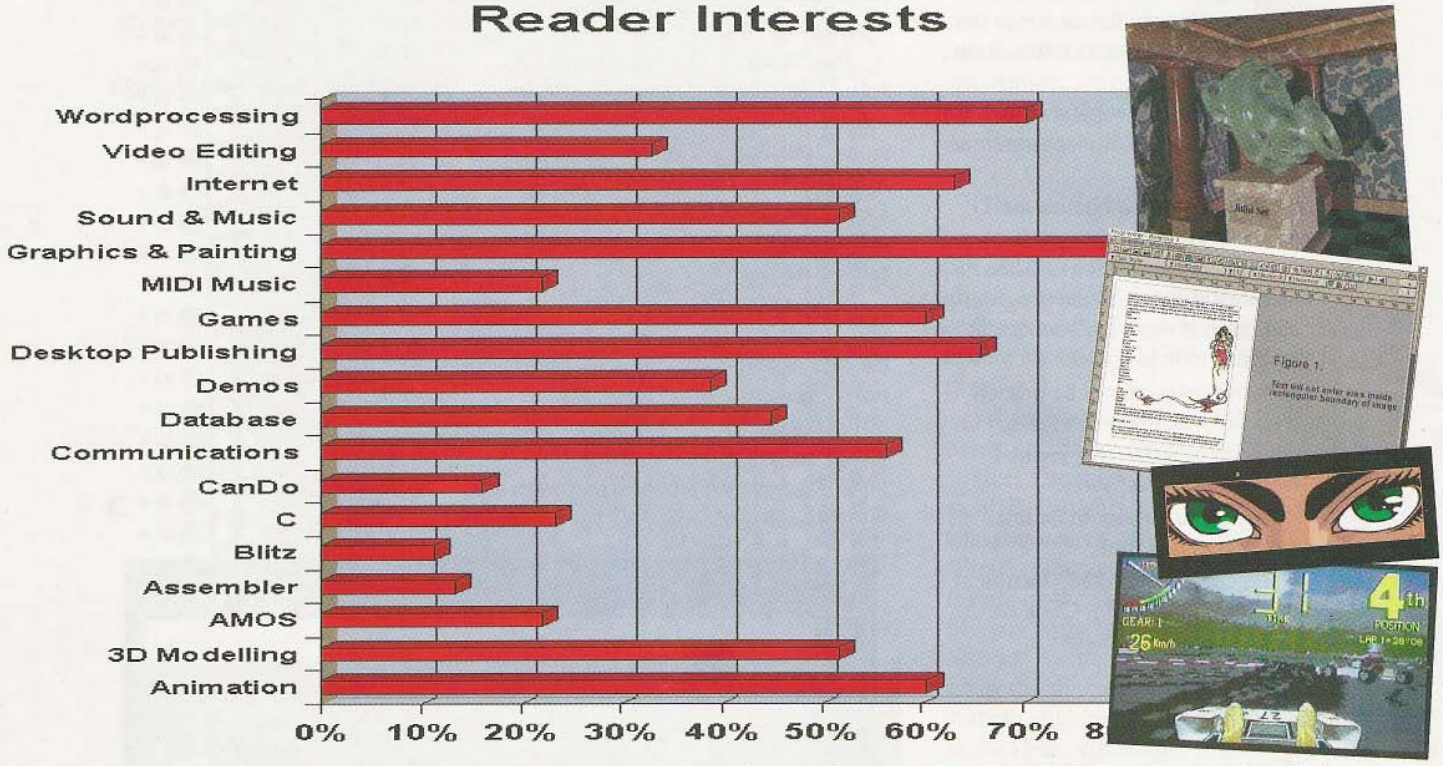

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to the editor

More Amiga plans

I am writing partly to respond to Darrin Hawkes' letter "Soapbox Time" in the September edition of your mag, and to the general attitude that I have picked up from net newsgroups.

Darrin wrote that he wanted to see an A1200 with the minimum processor an '030 at 28 or 33MHz. Other people I have heard give an opinion on this suggest a similar figure.

I want to suggest that if the A1200 is to survive as a good games machine and be useful for other "low end" tasks it needs to have a similar amount of grunt to a similarly aimed PC.

The minimum system that PC buyers purchase these days is a 486/66 or, increasingly, a Pentium 75, and they can get the former for CHEAP prices.

Considering that the A1200 is aimed at a more budget market, and also considering the lead time for a new model (factors which weigh against one another), people should be seeking a low end Amiga with, AT THE BARE MINIMUM, an '040 at 25MHz and more sensibly 33 or 40MHz.

Granted, these chips are more expensive and would increase the price of the A1200 through both the chip itself and the supporting architecture. But people will not be forever content to buy computers great at the good ol' platformer when they gaze across at their PC mate who's playing MechWarrior 2 or Descent or Magic Carpet (or Doom) or a plethora of other killer 3D games. Consoles aside, PCs are the games machine of choice these days.

Now before someone cries foul and points their finger at Gloom and Alien Breed 3D as examples of 3D games hitting the Amiga market, let me say that I've seen the Gloom demo (haven't got the AB3D demo yet but I saw a screenshot on Team17's own Web page) and the experience is lacking.

Sure, they've got 3D texture mapping and all the other mod cons, but playing in a little 4x5 inch window on a 14 inch monitor is less than ideal.

People, rise up and break the yoke of the '020 and the '030 (processors that were state of the art more than SEVEN years ago!) and become Power Users at heart (at least). Enjoy the classic platformer, but look ahead to the possibilities if we keep up with the state of the processing art.

Matthew Suter,
Mt Evelyn, VIC,
via Internet

Slow subs?

I have been a subscriber to your magazine now for over two years, and enjoy reading it from front to back. You and your team have been doing a great job, so keep up the good work.

However - yep, there is the inevitable "however" - the time it takes for the magazine to reach my little P.O. Box pigeonhole is VERY far from being impressive!

For example, this month's issue, October, reached my P.O. Box today, the 23rd of October, just three weeks into the month! (Yes, you're right, a hint of sarcasm!)

It's all very well saving money by subscribing, which means assured circulation for you, and that's good for business, but having to wait until the third week of the month is pushing it a little, and it's not only this month, my copies have been regularly arriving toward the latter part of each month, so there must be something not working properly out there.

I know that you've had some problems, I read about them in your magazine, but believe me, they are still there!

I subscribe to a lot of magazines - fishing, aviation etc; it is easier, saves me having to go to the newsagent, I always get my copy and I save some bucks as well, and I can truly say, that with all the others, they are on time, in some cases even ahead of time, so if they can do it, I'm sure that the people looking after your distribution can also do it, yes? So what's happening here?

Holger Schaarschmidt,
Doncaster East Vic.

Ed: *The reason your - and everybody else's - Amiga Review's been turning up late in the month is simple. That's when we finished it.*

The on-sale date for Amiga Review in October, when it's theoretically on the newsstands, was October 18th. Getting the mag on the 23rd, given simultaneous newsagent and subscriber distribution, is not a fabulous result but not remarkably bad, given the intervening weekend.

As we've said before, there is one, and only one, way to make your magazine get to the subscribers before it gets to the newsagents. Hold back the newsagent copies. It's a common strategy, and successful in magazines that aren't too time-critical; we could

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do it, but we don't; we like the magazine to be as current as possible, which we think is important for computer publications.

Down with Win 95!

I have read the Windows 95 versus Workbench comparison, and I would like to add my own commentary to this article.

I'll bet any money that a lot of people who bought Windows 95 didn't know what they were purchasing.

Even the ones who attended the world-wide Loserfest '95 at 0:01, 24/08/95, in their respective countries. These would be the fools who think that a Microsoft mouse is actually an improvement over a good, standard and inexpensive alternative, and that Microsoft is a large company because it has the best technology.

I'd be interested to see how many bugs the latest version of the world's least inspiring operating system has. Its predecessor had a little glitch with its calculator (12.52-12.51=0.00?). It's no wonder that many security organisations around the world are refusing to upgrade from Windows 3.xx. Come to think of it, they're wrong for using Windows in the first place.

In the article, the Intel 80x86 processor was mentioned. We all see it as inferior to its Motorola competitor, but I distinctly remember a letter by a computer engineer to and Atari magazine (don't throw the tomatoes yet!) stating that the humble MC68000 CPU actually matched the 80386 at any given clock speed.

Just for curiosity's sake, Sun Microsystems reckon that their SPARC CPU platform is good until 3000AD; Escom should give this beauty a look for the RISC Amigas.

It is so easy for so many people to be taken for a ride - no matter who is driving. I am not surprised, as this is the world where some are taking Windows NT's threat to UNIX seriously. It's too easy to just give up, so I won't. I'm happy being a David in a world full of Goliaths. Let's hope that, should the consumers' common sense prevail, companies like Escom don't get swell-headed and pursue the greedy policies that I believe Microsoft is using right now.

I would also suggest that Escom issue all new A4000s with PC-Task as standard software - what does everybody else think?

Karim D. Ghantous,
Balwyn Vic

Ed: *We quite agree with you about the midnight Windows-buyers - particularly ones such as the mob outside Harvey Norman's in Wollongong who'd watched Sydney TV and thought their local store would be open at midnight too. Wrong.*

We quite like the Microsoft mouses, though. Comfy, and as reliable as ball mouses get - though we agree you can get something not noticeably worse for less.

In the bug department, Windows 95 seems relatively clean. It's not perfect, but we've found nothing crippling in the time we've been using the system.

Your side-point about the 386 and the 68000 is actually true - clock 'em both at 8MHz and they benchmark quite similarly. Of course, 68000s only come in 8MHz, 16MHz and the rare 28MHz variant, while the 386s still in service today are often 40MHz - but it's a cute piece of trivia nonetheless.

Sun have good taste in processors - they were using the 68000 in their Sun 1 and 2 models when it was the King Of All Chips at the start of the 80s. Then they moved through the 020 and 030, had a brief and disastrous flirtation with 80386s and then ran screaming into the SPARC line.

If Sun think they can keep the SPARC CPU lineage going until George Jetson's grandchildren die, it's because "SPARC" processors aren't made by Sun - they're made by whoever Sun thinks makes a good processor that Sun can adapt their OS to, adopted and renamed.

The SuperSPARC and microSPARC were Texas Instruments chips, and the subsequent models have been Fujitsus - but the more recent variants are really made by ROSS Technology, which was bought by Fujitsu. There's no real "SPARC line", per se.

So there. I go into this in such detail to show why nobody's seriously raised the possibility of using SPARC processors in an Amiga; if you used one of these processors, it'd be a Fujitsu, not a SPARC.

Up with Win 95!

I'm an ex-Amiga user, from the early days of Workbench 1.2 on an A1000 to 3.1 in my trusty Amiga 1200 with 6Mb RAM. Early this year I decided to move into the world of MS-DOS. I purchased ed a shiny new DX4/100 with 8Mb RAM etc, etc and was amazed at the speed of the machine.

The games were good, there was plenty of software to choose from, BUT there was MS-DOS and Windows 3.11 to contend with. Now I'm no computer expert, but an Amiga's Workbench is leaps and bounds ahead of the PC nightmare they call an operating system, so much so that I put the PC in the paper for sale, and was thinking of buying another Amiga.

Just as this thought was running through my mind, a friend of mine purchased a copy of Win 95. I had a look, I liked what I saw, pulled my PC out of the paper and bought a copy of Win 95 for myself. Since then I have had a good dose of it, and I must say I'm impressed. Who would have guessed it - a top operating system on a PC. Well done Microsoft.

P.S. Keep up the good work. I

have followed you from the Amiga Review to the PC Review and I have found the same high quality mag - well done.

A Morton,
Brisbane Qld

Price complaint

Confusion first - Why is the Australian PC Review, your sister magazine, only $4.95, bigger and on better quality paper, while us Amiga Review readers have to settle for $5.95, thinner paper and overall a more flimsy magazine?

If, as you say, paper prices have gone up, then why did you decrease the quality of the mag AND increase the price? Surely you just could have done one?

Now for a thought I have just recently had. My idea is for you to create a Storm Front Studios BBS which caters for both Amiga and PC Reviews. In this BBS you will be able to send your letters to the editor, enter competitions, keep up with gossip that you just got the day after your mags went to print, and countless other things. You could also order PD software from an on-line catalogue.

Sam Haddow,
Katherine East NT

Ed: *Amiga Review costs more than PC Review and is printed on thinner paper (though both have the same number of pages) essentially because we don't sell as many copies. Advertising revenue comes into it too, but sales is the major factor.*

The paper we're on at the moment is as thin as we could reasonably go; if we'd stuck with the old paper stock we'd have had to crank the price more to remain reasonably profitable.

We've toyed with the BBS idea for a while, but haven't pursued it, for two reasons. One, we haven't the time to administer what would not be a particularly profitable operation - unless we charged customer-scaring membership fees and offered appropriate value, like a searchable database of articles, which people, being people, would rip off... you get the picture.

We're very interested in the idea of getting ourselves a World Wide Web site, since bulletin boards are a bit passé these days and Websites can have the boring gruntwork done by another company. This idea is still speculative at the moment, though.

The Amiga lives

I subscribe to Amiga Review and buy PC Review as a matter of interest. Glad to read that there are others out there who aren't in the rat race of keeping up with the Joneses and/or technology.

Golly. I can't believe the problems the PC user comes up against compared to us Amiga users. My interest lies with desktop video. To do the same on a PC you have to have all the extras - video cards, sound cards, genlocks etc, all added to the cost of the PC, before it gets to its "use-by date".

I don't consider a computer out of date if it's still doing the job you want it to do. Wordprocessor, database, spreadsheet, paint program, music and games. I turn out some interesting video graphics on my 1988 computer. Total cost with extras like a hard drive and genlock is about $1200.

No, I don't have a CD-ROM or modem; the Internet sounds interesting, but not enough to outlay hard-earned bucks. Maybe it's just a conspiracy via the media to sell more hardware and software.

Surfing the Net for the average user is just looking around, which to me would become a bit boring after you have been there a few times. As I mentioned before - interesting, that's all. Not for me, at the present costs.

N. J. Dean,
Qld

Ed: *Indeed, you need to spend some real money to get video happening on an IBM compatible - but at least you CAN do it now; the Pegasus VGA-to-video board for PCs costs "only" $800 or so, and lets IBM-compatible users make use of genlocks and effects boxes pretty much like an Amiga user.*

But with regard to the Internet - it's big. Very very big. You can't really talk about "being there a few times". But we agree; while very interesting, the Internet is far from essential to the continued existence of the average computer user.

❑

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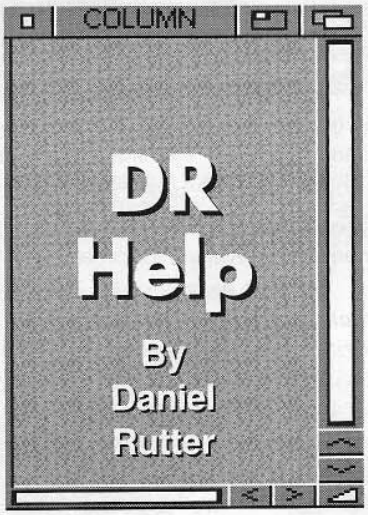
If you have any information to help us keep this list updated, please fax details to (02) 565 1220 or call (02) 557 4266. Thank you.



A500 expansion

I'm writing this letter because I'm a novice and have a few questions. I have an A500 with a 512k expander and a 1084S monitor. I'm considering buying a 68020 accelerator with 1Mb of fast RAM, which gives me the same processing power as an A1200. If I buy a hard drive with room for 8Mb of fast RAM, do I get 1Mb of chip RAM, 1Mb of 32 bit fast RAM and 8Mb of fast RAM, or can I only expand my machine to 8Mb max? Can I, and is it worth, upgrading the old beast with an AGA chipset, or am I better off just purchasing a 1200 or even a 4000 for future expansion?

Shane Kemper,
Carrara Qld

Dr Help: *An A500 can address a total of 9Mb of RAM - 8Mb fast, 1Mb chip (or 512k chip, 512k slow/fast by default - a simple hardware hack lets you use the whole first megabyte of RAM as chip). If you get an 020 or 030 accelerator, you must have at least some 32 bit RAM or it won't run at anything like its maximum speed; ideally, all of your fast RAM should be 32 bit, so you don't fill the 32 bit RAM, get stuck with the 16 bit and suddenly lose speed.*

You can't upgrade older machines to AGA. And if you're considering shelling out for an accelerator already (to plug into a computer that's worth maybe $250, including the monitor and extra drive...), a 1200 is certainly a much more capable solution to put your money towards.

Mystery resets

My main computer, an A500 with 1Mb chip and 4Mb fast RAM and a GVP Series 2 hard drive, keeps resetting itself on startup. It does this a few times until it's warmed up, and then seems OK. Also, very occasionally it locks up, with the Caps Lock light flashing. WHat's wrong, and can I fix it myself?

It's difficult to get a repairer here in Orange - no, on reflection, it's impossible. I have a spare A500 with a smashed case that I could take spares from.

My wife also has a 500 fitted with an AdSpeed board and a triple ROM switcher, and a 1Mb card in the trapdoor, and she wants to know if it would be OK to have the 1Mb chip RAM modification, as I have already done to my own 500, done to this machine as well. Will it work OK?

Lastly, is there any way at all, other than connecting 2 Amigas, that I can use my A570 AND my hard drive together on the one computer?

Thanks, in anticipation, for the help!

Tony Mepham,
Orange NSW

Dr Help: *Your A500 seems to be showing the signs of old age. The fault's obviously thermal, but I've no idea which component's causing it. If it still does it with the GVP box disconnected, try opening the 500 and selectively heating chips with a hairdryer, then powering up and seeing what works. Or grab yourself a can of freezer spray from an electronics store (also useful for humanely killing bugs - 70 degrees below zero in one second!), selectively freeze chips with the machine on and see what makes it reboot. If you can find a definite dud chip this way, swap it out with the equivalent from your spare 500 and you'll be laughing.*

If the board in your wife's 500 is a conventional 512k RAM expansion, bringing its total RAM to 1Mb, the 1Mb chip modification should work fine with the other expansions.

Theoretically, you can daisy-chain devices on the side expansion bus of the A500. You just need a passthrough port on the gadgets. Since neither of your boxes have this port, you're pretty much stuffed, unless you wish upon a star and create a technician who can bodge one up for you.

Mac emulation questions

I wish to buy into a DTP franchise that produces a free monthly magazine. I would appreciate any advice you can give me.

1) The magazine is produced using Adobe Pagemaker 5 on the Macintosh, and is outputted as a PM5 file to a floptical disk which is sent to head office for final editing before being downloaded to the printing service. I have been told by a fellow Amiga owner (A4000/040) that it's possible to emulate the Mac on the Amiga and that the speed comparison is favourable. Can you advise on a) what emulations are available b) compatibility (as this will be my sole source of income, it needs to be bulletproof) c) speed.

2) The floptical drive used by the franchise is an external SCSI device. Is it possible to use this with a SCSI equipped Amiga, and how can I get the Amiga to read/write/format the Macintosh disks?

3) Do any of the hardware emulators support non-Macintosh printers, such as Canon bubblejets and laser printers?

4) I also admit to owning an IBM clone (Shock! Horror!), a

486DX2/66 that only cost me $1000 to put together. I have MS Word, Excel and Corel Draw and copy tables and spreadsheets into Corel for export as Adobe Illustrator files for use in PageStream on the Amiga, as the Amiga lacks any decent software to do tables, spreadsheets and so on. I also export a lot of clip art from the Corel CD-ROM to Illustrator format for use in PageStream. But some of these files are too big to transport on floppies, even after compression. Is there a cheap way of either networking or linking the clone to my Amiga using the serial or parallel port? Also, is there a Corel Draw import filter for PageStream anywhere, to save me exporting to Illustrator format?

David White,
Williamtown NSW

Dr Help: *There are a few Mac emulations for the Amiga, but they've all got a few things in common. They capitalise on the fact that the old style 680x0-driven Macintoshes (as opposed to the new PowerPC-packing PowerMacs) use the same processors as Amigas, and don't have any awkward custom chips to emulate. This means you can run a Mac emulation very fast indeed - faster, in fact, than a Mac with an equivalent processor.*

The most expensive Amiga Mac emulator is Emplant from Utilities Unlimited, which is a board with its own SCSI controller, sockets for the Mac ROMs (which you have to buy) and the potential to be upgraded to emulate a PC as well. Amax IV, reviewed in the July Amiga Review, is a similar gadget with no onboard SCSI and no upgradability.

And ShapeShifter, checked out in the August Amiga Review, is a shareware ($US40) software-only solution that requires the Mac ROMs be read into a file (legally, you still have to own a Mac or ROM set).

All of these emulators are highly compatible, provided your Amiga hardware can actually do what you're asking of it. If you don't have a 24 bit graphics board, don't expect to be able to use better video modes than your Amiga could ordinarily manage, for example.

You can use the floptical drive with the Amiga as easily as plugging it into your SCSI card with address and termination correctly set. To read the Mac cartridges, you'll need CrossMAC, conveniently reviewed in the September magazine. Macintosh formatting is a peculiar art and so it's possible disks you FORMAT on your machine won't be legible on some Macs, but otherwise the compatibility should be perfect.

The Amiga Macintosh emulators all support any printer a Mac driver exists for, provided you're not trying to drive a giant printer via SCSI or something, in which case you could run into problems. There is, as far as we know, no Corel Draw import filter for PageStream.

Moving files from Amiga to IBM and vice versa is easy, with Twin Express and a serial cable. I could go on - and in fact I did, in the article on the subject in the last Amiga Review!

Talking To Myself

I've got an A500 with an A530 accelerator/hard drive controller, and among other things have recently connected a Zip drive to it. The drive works fine - but only with blank Zip disks, not with the Zip Tools disk that comes in the box. I can't partition, low level format or indeed write in any way to the Zip Tools disk, which always reports Error 28.

Daniel Rutter,
Gladesville NSW

Dr Help: *Well, me, I've checked into this and congratulations - it's a Known Problem!*

The best guess on this issue is that the Zip Tools disk is software write protected, and certain GVP controllers notice this and refuse to write to it (returning Error 28), while various others ignore it. Solution - if you want to format the disk, do it on a different machine with a less fussy SCSI controller. Once set up elsewhere, the disk will then work fine on your Series II.

A4000 booster

Please help me! I want to know if I can use an IDE CD-ROM on my A4000, similar to the way my hard drives work. If I can, what software can I get to do it?

Secondly, do you know where I could get a surface mount 68030 to replace my 68EC030 and who could fit it?

Richard Kirman,
Brisbane Qld

Dr Help: *You'll be dismayed to learn that the A4000 and A1200 IDE controllers can't, by default, control anything but hard drives, and they can get a bit stroppy even over two ordinary drives. It is theoretically possible to control an ATAPI standard IDE CD-ROM (the most common flavour of non-proprietary drive) from AGA machines' IDE controllers, and we've tried out the software that purports to do it - the best we've managed is a CD device that couldn't recognise any discs. The eject command worked fine. Perhaps the drives we tried weren't ATAPI enough.*

You can stick a SCSI CD-ROM in your machine easily enough, and you can use a cheap slow SCSI card (A2091 ho!) if you like because the limiting factor for CD-ROM's the CD access speeds, not the bus speed. But the internal controller will not work.

Continued on page . . . 52

Term 4.5

Is the biggest terminal also the best?

By Daniel Rutter

On the day before Christmas, 1990, a chap in Germany called Olaf Barthel had nothing better to do than start writing an Amiga terminal program, and could think of nothing better to call it than Term. He finished the first version of Term on the 25th of January, and since that day there have been a flurry of upgrades and changes which, over time, have established Term as the Amiga's most popular general purpose communications program.

If you're a communications novice, most of Term's features and much of this article will be confusing to you. Don't worry (but do check out the Jargon Buster at the end!). If you're just calling bulletin boards, Term's default settings will be fine for just about everything. All you have to do is set it to the speed of your modem and make phonebook entries for the boards you want to call. You'll also be glad to know that there's a special section of the manual devoted to basic program configuration, so you don't wander blindly into the forest of possible settings.

But once you start getting more experienced, rest assured that Term can do just about anything. It's not the quickest, and certainly not the smallest, but it's the most capable, bar none.

Cheap!

One nice thing about Term is that it's giftware; this is the laid back version of shareware which doesn't actually REQUIRE you to send the author anything if you use the program, but merely requests a donation or gift (a list of suitable gifts is provided in Term's documentation!). The only unusual restriction the author's placed on Term is that people or organisations associated with the production of weapons or fissionable material aren't allowed to use it. So there.

What's good about it?

Term includes every feature you need in a terminal. In case you don't know what these features are, here's a quick list of the basic features. Capture to printer or file (capture to printer is good for paper terminal nostalgia but not much else, and file capture can grab incoming data verbatim, stripping nothing); a review buffer and the ability to record login scripts for bulletin boards.

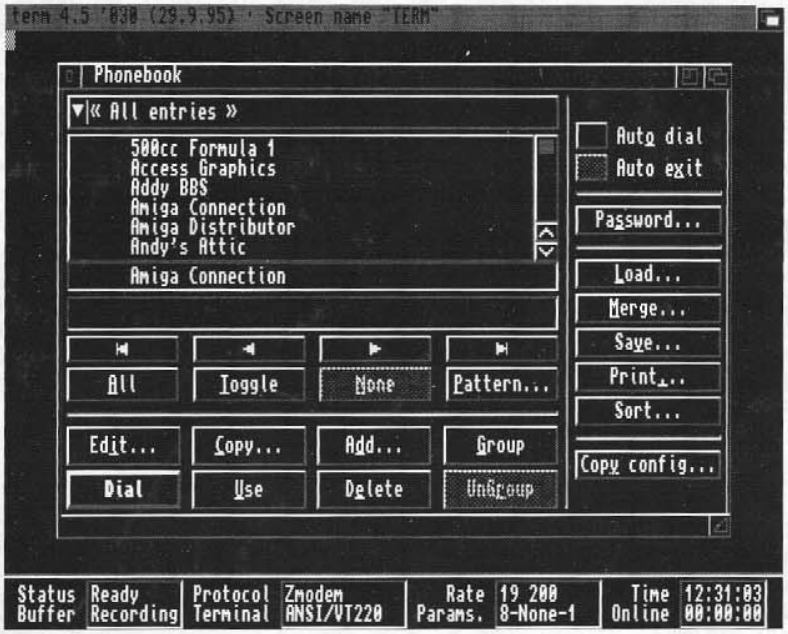
Something you don't find in many terminals is an ARexx interface; Term has one, it's comprehensive, and it's well documented, with a nice Amigaguide file that matches the other documentation. Naturally, the Amigaguide help is easily accessible from within Term as well.

The only emulation built into Term is the VT220 mode used by every text-only service these days, but you can also use any XEM 2.0 external emulation library - which, for most users, is not very important.

Similarly, Term in and of itself doesn't have any transfer protocols - you use XPR libraries for that, and most users will simply use XPRZModem.library, which comes with the pack. Oddities like the Hydracom bidirectional transfer system (send and receive at once) are also supported, but you'll need a BBS (or friend) that also has the protocol.

Got a weird graphics card? AGA? ECS? It doesn't matter. Term doesn't do any illegal tricks to make its text display faster, which means it won't break on Workbench emulations, Workbench 3.1 or any other system-legal but unusual configurations.

The down side of this is that users of slower Amigas get to watch the famous Amiga LumpyScrollingTextMode(TM), but Term isn't very friendly to slow machines anyway (see below). Personally, I think Term's



doing pretty well; the only problems it still has are niggles with non-system-compliant utilities and badly written XPR libraries.

Term's phonebook is, like the rest of the program, very well worked out. V4.5 has a whole new phonebook design, with many elements carried over from previous versions - including, thankfully, the file format.

Numbers can be grouped, so you can, for example, have a group of BBS numbers and another group of friends. There aren't any real database features - you can't, for example, set numbers up as both "STD" or "local" and "BBS" or "friend", but you'd need a pretty big phonebook for this level of power to be important to you.

For easy access, there's a configurable "Dial" menu last on the menu bar, in which you can put your most frequently dialled numbers - if they're in different groups, they'll appear in submenus. You can even have an auto-dial list of numbers Term will dial as soon as you start it up, making basic remote computing applications simpler.

The minimum spec Amiga for running Term is a 68000-driven 2Mb Workbench 2 machine. A faster processor is a very good idea, though; Term runs OK on a stock 1200 and sweetly on anything better.

Overall

After all these revisions, everything's incorporated and everything's polished. Barthel has said that Term development may stop with v4.5, since everything he wanted to add has been added, everything that didn't work has been fixed, and it's not actually making him any huge piles of money anyway.

Early versions of Term weren't worth bothering with, thanks to a veritable Amazon-load of bugs. But Term's been a classy program now for a long time, and 4.5 is near-perfect. If you've got a 68020 or better machine with 2Mb of RAM and a modem and don't have Term, you're missing out.

❑

To order a copyof Term 4.5 for $13.50, call 008 252 879.

Jargon Buster

Buffer: A terminal program's scrollback, or review, buffer is a window you can open that contains everything that's appeared on the screen in that session, with a settable amount of data viewed before the old text starts getting dumped off the top. You can page through the buffer, save it to a file or print it.

Bulletin board: A computer with one or more modems, set up as a file and message repository for other modem-equipped computer users to call. Much less cool than an Internet link, but simpler and friendlier.

Capture: When everything that appears on the screen of a terminal program is automatically sent to a file or the printer, it's said to be "captured". Compare "buffer".

Modem: The box that lets a computer communicate over a phone line with another modem-equipped computer.

Terminal: A device that receives or transmits digital information. There are dedicated terminals that do nothing else, from which the "terminal emulations" in communications software for personal computers take their names. A communications program that does terminal emulation is commonly called a terminal program. A paper terminal is the old, old version - it prints everything to paper, because it has no monitor.

ZModem: The most popular file transfer protocol for simple point-to-point applications, like bulletin boards. When you send or receive a file with ZModem, it is very unlikely the file will be corrupted, you won't have to tell the computer at the receiving end what the file's called, aborted transfers can be resumed without resending all of the data already sent, and the transfer will be nice and fast. If you take these features for granted, you are not an old hand at comms.

❑

Future Amigas

PowerPC - it's official!

By Daniel Rutter

AMIGA

Petro Tyschtschenko, the President of Amiga Technologies, spoke at the Los Angeles Video Toaster Expo on November the 2nd.

After introducing himself and Amiga Technologies and unveiling examples of the Escom-produced A1200 and A4000 packages, he got down to the nitty gritty, including officially announcing that the processor for the next generation Amiga will be the PowerPC chip. Highlights of the transcript follow!

Ladies and Gentlemen, we have sold our first 10,000 Amiga 1200's in Europe. These were not only sold to our distributors and dealers. All of them went over the shelves to the end users.

The demand is more than satisfying. We are happy to see that the Amiga didn't lose its appeal towards the customer.

The success is like in earlier Commodore times, but the difference is that now a new management of competent and motivated people who love and know the Amiga is taking care of business.

Our strength is that we are a dynamic team that can react quickly to new situations and we also learned from the mistakes Commodore made.

Some people over here think that ESCOM AG acquired the rights to Commodore just to build a few computers for the Christmas season and leave the market afterwards. Ladies and Gentlemen, that is neither my style, nor the kind of business I like to do. Amiga is a long term project. We want to establish a market and give the Amiga the position it deserves because we believe that this product is a good alternative to PC's and Macintoshes.

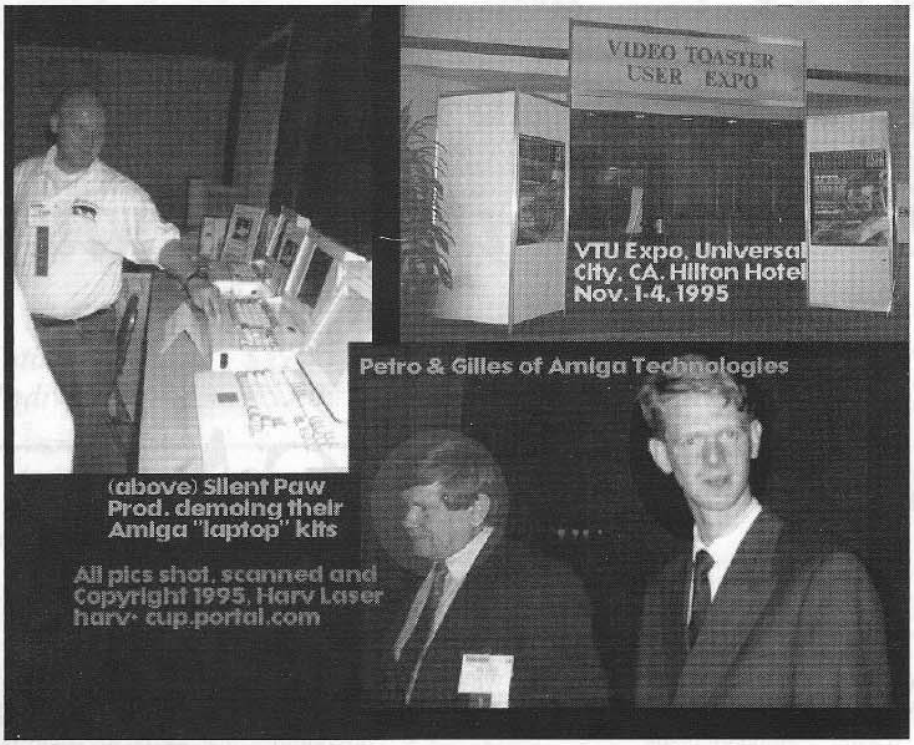
ESCOM invested several times the amount of money that was spent for the takeover of Commodore. We want this investment to fructify (sic) in the future and we know that our product has the best possible chances to succeed.

The market in the USA is very important for us. I want to make a commitment here. We do not intend to concentrate our efforts only on Europe.

Our location (is) in Bensheim, granted, but our market is worldwide. The A4000T is the product that is wanted most in the USA. We are currently thinking of the possibilities that we could have to market the A1200 here too.

The American market is not only important to us for selling hardware. There also is a great potential of development intelligence here. Newtek, for instance, is an important partner for us. We want to support the Video Toaster and are currently negotiating with Newtek to build up a strong partnership and set up license agreements to get new products based on the Video Toaster technology. Newtek will also buy 1,000 A4000 Towers from us.

The Set-Top Box is an important topic at Amiga Technologies. We have now finalized agreements in the USA. I will mention our agreement with Viscorp that has just been finalized a few weeks ago. Through Set-Top Box systems, we are confident that the Amiga platform will enter into millions of households. No other computer manufacturer is able to provide a system that multitasks in 2Mb of memory at a cost effective price.



"Long awaited features like memory protection, virtual memory and strong network abilities are on top of our TO-DO list."

Our partnership with SCALA brings SCALA MM300 to the user out of the box. All Amiga models fitted with hard drives include that popular multimedia package. More than a partner, SCALA is also an important customer for Amiga Technologies. SCALA purchased 1000 Amiga 4000 Towers to provide their customers with high-end multimedia systems.

The demand for the Amiga 4000T is also very high in Europe. We know that the price tag has been set quite high. This is due to the fact that the Amiga 4000T is actually a new product for us. Setting up its production was an expensive task that needed the competencies and know-how of many people. The production costs are currently about 40% higher than in Commodore times.

Actually, we planned to bring out the Amiga 4000T before the Amiga 1200, but the complexity of this product made it impossible to respect the schedules. But, finally it is available. The first models came out of the lines this week.

Ladies and Gentlemen, our strength, more than the hardware platform, is our operating system. Amiga OS is excellent and will become even better. We have decided to port it to other platforms as soon as possible. Of course, we are also aware of the features that our system lacks. Long awaited features like memory protection, virtual memory and strong network abilities are on top of our TO-DO list. The next version of AmigaDOS will include all these.

We also need software for the Amiga. It is absolutely necessary to improve the existing products as well as get new applications developed or ported to the Amiga OS. We are setting up the support for Amiga developers. This will be working through BBS systems and Internet. The German CBM European HQ is already up and running in Bensheim. We now also have an Amiga Technologies Web page. We will be very active on the Internet in the future.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is more and more evident every day that the combination of Intel and Windows 95 is not satisfying for many people. It is also a threat for the computer market that a monopoly like this tends to establish itself.

Therefore, it is important that systems like the Amiga improve their market position, so that the user can still find an alternative way. To improve our market position, we know that we need to improve the product. This improvement has to be done on the hardware and the software side. The 68000 processor family from Motorola that is still powering our models will end its evolution after the 68060.

We knew from the beginning that we had to look for a new processor. There were many options possible. Motorola proposed the PowerPC. There was also the HP PA, the Minisparc or DEC Alpha processors. All of them had advantages and disadvantages. The

choice was very hard, indeed.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we made our choice. The next Amiga will be called the Power Amiga. We removed the PC for aesthetic purposes. Let me now explain this choice.

The PowerPC processor is fast. Especially when it runs a decent operating system. We believe that with an operating system like the Amiga OS, the PowerPC processor will show all the power that it has. It will be faster than with other operating systems.

Another important reason for our choice is the strategic partnerships that this processor brings to us. Apple already did the experience of a migration from 68000 processors to PowerPC and we can take advantage of this experience. We have now been in negotiations with Apple for a certain time and a future partnership between both companies is becoming realistic.

Motorola and IBM will also be precious partners for the Power Amiga project; on the software side, as well as on the hardware side.

Ladies and gentlemen, all in all, the Power Amiga project will be involving more than a dozen companies. We are confident and think that such a synergy will make things happen very fast. Our team is ready to go.

The big question

The immediate now is not where the Amiga's going, per se - with the PowerPC decision, future generations of the machine will at least to some extent be joining the mainstream, and should be readily compatible with PowerMacs and the other PowerPC machines now emerging.

The immediate question that remains is how the current Amiga models will fare over the next year; Amiga Technologies will need a superhuman effort to come up with a functional PowerPC machine with a working AmigaDOS-variant operating system inside that time. But the virtual-memory, memory protected AmigaDOS Tyschtschenko mentioned could help bridge the gap. Intersting times, indeed.

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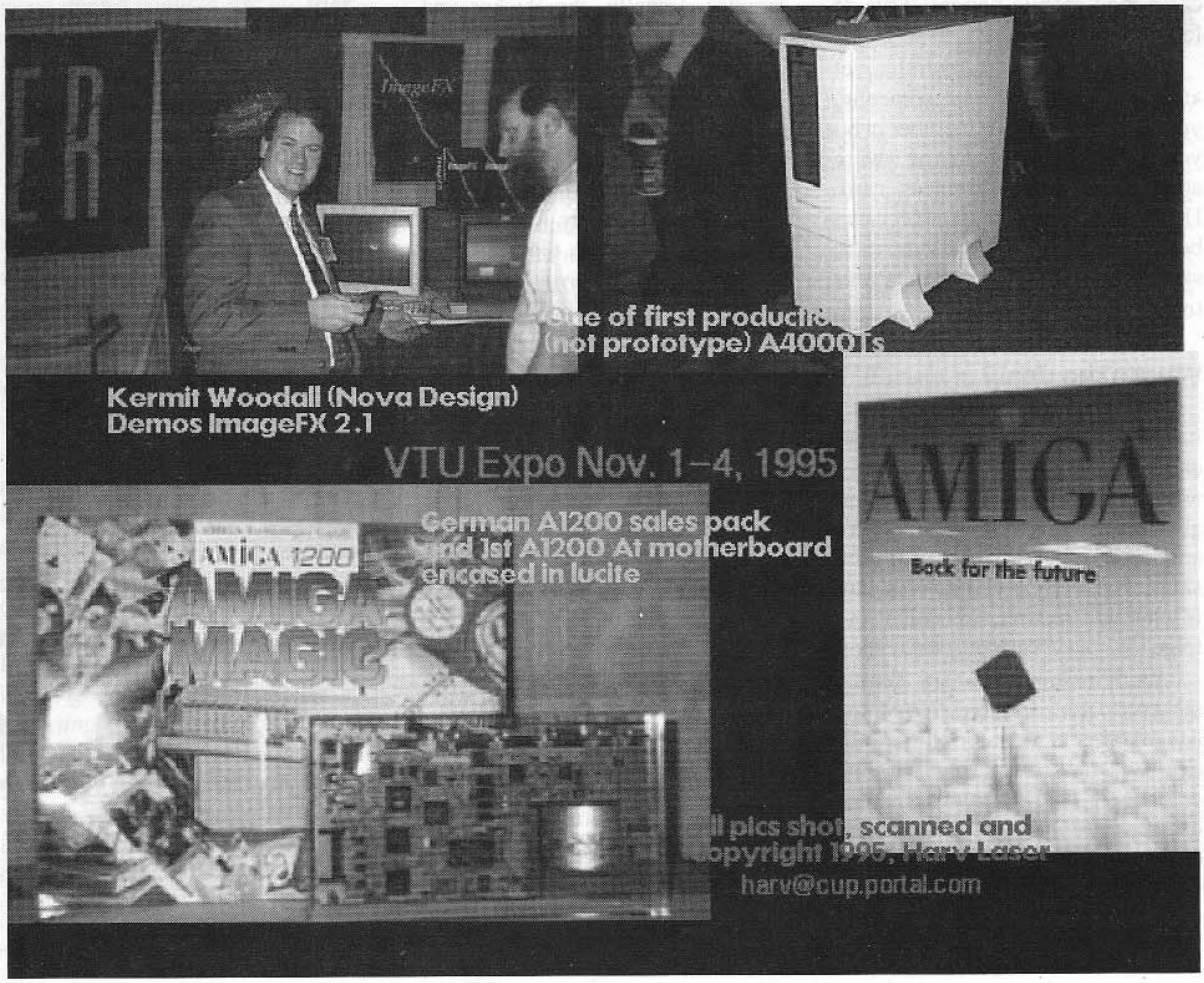


Business Cards

Saving Money with Pro Page

By Stuart Farrell

More people have business cards than mobile phones. True or false?

Probably false, in Australia, yet after you've talked with someone, you want them to remember who you were and what you were about. Hence the business card. However, the cost of stationery can be quite high, so here's how to save some money by creating your own business cards.

What's the deal?

For starters, you're already saving money by doing the business card yourself. However, a word of warning - don't expect professional results if you don't really have any knowledge of design. Still, if a simple, cost effective business card is what you're after, this is the way to go.

We'll assume you are getting the card quick printed. You may have white cardboard with black text, and maybe one or two solid colours in the logo. These are called spot colours, matched on the computer using the Pantone colour system. When it comes to selecting the card and thickness, go to your quick printer and look over some samples. Usually, the thicker and fancier the card (textures), the more expensive it will be.

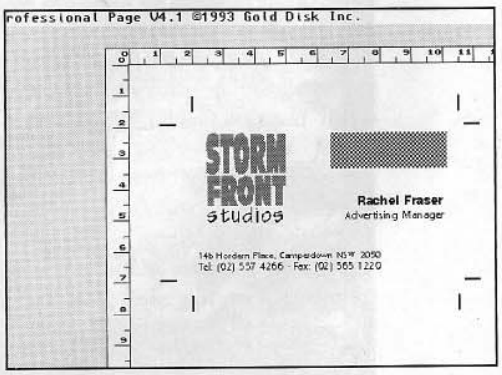
Professional Page has some great genies, one of which is the GroupTile genie. The trick to saving money when it comes to printing business cards is to tile them on, say, an A4 page, eight-up. After you've created your business card, copy that card another seven times on the page using GroupTile. Now you may be asking what the difference is between doing one card and printing it 500 times (sometimes printers request you to do two-up if over 200 anyway), and tiling the card eight-up and printing it 63 times. Apart from the obvious format difference and a small cost decrease, tiling allows you to have up to eight different cards printed. Say you have extra staff who need cards, or you want personalised ones and plain ones, one for your other small business, or maybe a friend who wants to go halves in the print cost. Now you can see the saving, right? Good. Now let's see how to do this in Professional Page easily.

Step by Step

Of course, there's nothing stopping you from just grouping the card, hitting SHIFT-K, moving the copied card into position and so on. But this way is a lot quicker and more accurate.

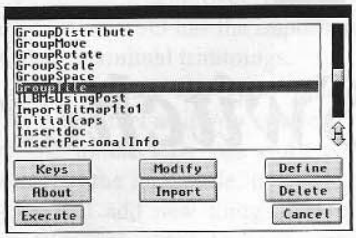
Assuming you've already designed the card, make sure you're using an A4 page - 21 x 29.7cm. Most business cards are 9 x 5 to 5.5cm. So fitting 8 cards on an A4 page is a tight squeeze, yet attainable. Make sure you have crop marks for the printer to trim the cards down. They don't have to be long - about 5mm wide, with the open space - the space between the edge of the card and the crop mark - about 3mm.

1.



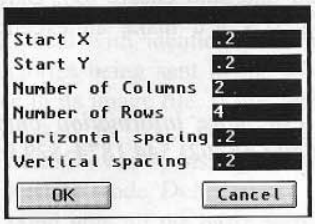
Now group the card using the grouping tool. Then go to the genies and select GroupTile.

2.



Now you have to put the coordinates in to work out the position of each card. Set the Offset X and Y to, say, 2mm. You want two rows and four columns to get eight to a page. Horizontal and vertical offset can be the same. Select OK, and wait.

3.



Hey presto! Eight cards all ready for you to add the different names of your staff. If someone needs more, do their name twice! (Here's one I prepared earlier in diagram 4).

If you want two different cards, put the two at the top and group them, then set the same coordinates except with only one column. Then you have four cards each, and so on. You get the picture. There are hundreds of combinations. Maybe two spot colours, one each, and so on...

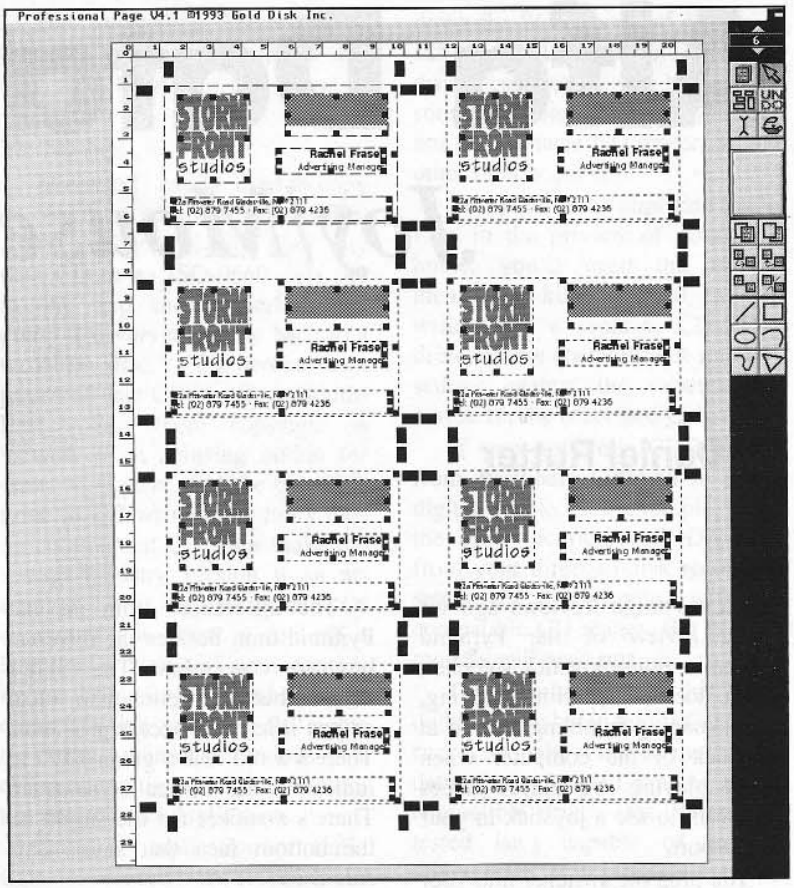
When it comes to printing out the cards, you're going to need a good quality printer, a laser printer if possible. If you have spot colour in the card, make sure you have mechanical turned on in the palette requester (see diagrams 5 & 6), so that when you print out the colour Postscript, spot will turn up as a colour, and Pro Page will print out a black plate and a spot plate. If you're confused about the printing process, talk to your local quick printer about it when you go to look at the card samples.

Remember that using paper plates and a quick printer is cheap, but you don't get the high detail from outputting to film and using metal plates. So keep it clean and simple. If you use spot colour, try to avoid the colour having to butt up to your black or another colour. You'll find that it won't line up exactly on every card. Stand alone colour is better in this case.

The average cost of quick printing a business card. With black and reflex blue as the spot colour for 500 one-up is $135. For 500 eight-up it's $98.

Thanks to No. 1 Instant Print at Gladesville. Phone (02) 816 4971.

4.



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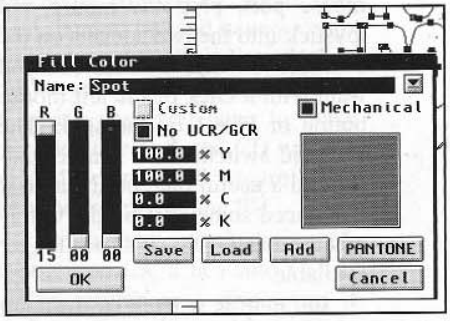
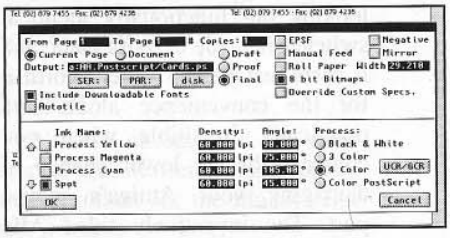




6.

If you have any questions regarding this or any other desktop publishing problem send them to the magazine for my attention or simply fax them over on (02) 565 1220 and I'll try to answer them.

Alfa Data's

Joy/Mouse Switcher

By Daniel Rutter

A few Amiga Reviews ago we ran a review of the Pyramid automatic mouse/joystick switcher, which does away with annoying, port-damaging fumbling around at the back of the computer when you're playing two player games and want to use a joystick in your mouse port.

You plug the switcher into your mouse port, plug the mouse and joystick into the two sockets on the switcher and select which one you want with a click of the left mouse button or Fire 1 on the stick. The Pyramid switcher is a simple gadget and a useful one, but its appeal is reduced somewhat by the unfortunate detail that it's no longer available.

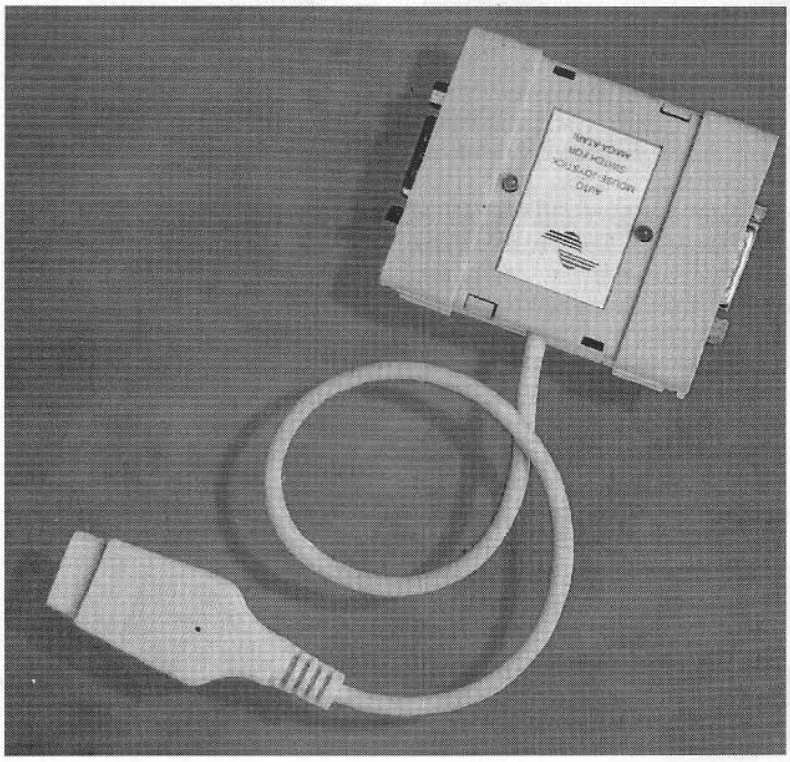
But help is at hand. A different looking but functionally identical switcher is made by Alfa Data, and it costs just $29.95 - well worth it for the convenience alone, and practically irresitible when you consider the far lower chance of damaging your Amiga's mouse port. The inventively titled Alfa Data Auto Mouse/Joystick Switcher is built in a D25 gender changer case, with a 9 pin connector on either end, a cable for your mouse port coming out of the middle and a couple of LEDs.

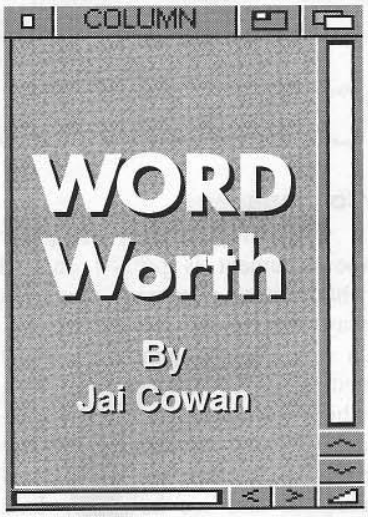
The differences from the old Pyramid unit, besides the different box, are very minor. The cable's shorter, but still better than 40cm so you'll have no access problems. There's a red and a green LED to indicate what device is selected. There's a sticker for the stupid on the bottom face that says "This side DOWN!"

This is a basic gizmo, but a good one, and cheap, too. Dare I suggest - it'd make an excellent gift.

For more information ontact Natdisc on (02) 544 1874. $29.95.

❑





Handling Big Documents

Welcome to yet another Wordworth tutorial. Last month I gave you a few tips on making the most of Wordworth's printing and some workarounds for some of the program's bugs. On the up side though, you can now get Wordworth 3.1 Release 2 from Amadeus Computers for nothing. That's right, it won't cost you a cent - just post your original disks away, and they'll copy the new version on to them and send them back. This new release ought to fix some bugs, so it's worth getting.

More perceptive readers may already have noticed that this tutorial guides you through setting up, typing in and printing a large document using Wordworth. Before you spend hours typing your bestseller-to-be, there are a few things to consider. At the risk of not catering for people with an imagesetter beside their Amiga, I'll be assuming you want to print a 20 page document onto A4 size paper.

Going back to basics, saving is, as you can imagine, imperative when constructing a document of this size. If it's not already enabled, switch on the autosave function in prefs, and set it to every two minutes with a backup. System crashes can happen to anyone.

Nightmares aside, with autosave on your work is safe. Note that if you don't save your settings, autosave won't be enabled the next time you run Wordworth.

To start, you need your text for the document. This can be something you've typed yourself, or a text file from elsewhere. The file should have as little formatting as possible, and preferably be in plain ASCII. If you don't have a big text file handy, continue reading and pretend you do, as some of the features I'll be explaining may prove useful in the future.

Once you've loaded the text into a new document, you can go into the Format/Document menu and set all the options. Attractive looking pieces of text at the top and base of each page can be added simply by using headers and footers. You can enable them by going into the Options menu and clicking "use headers and footers". The margins for the headers and footers also need to be appropriately adjusted.

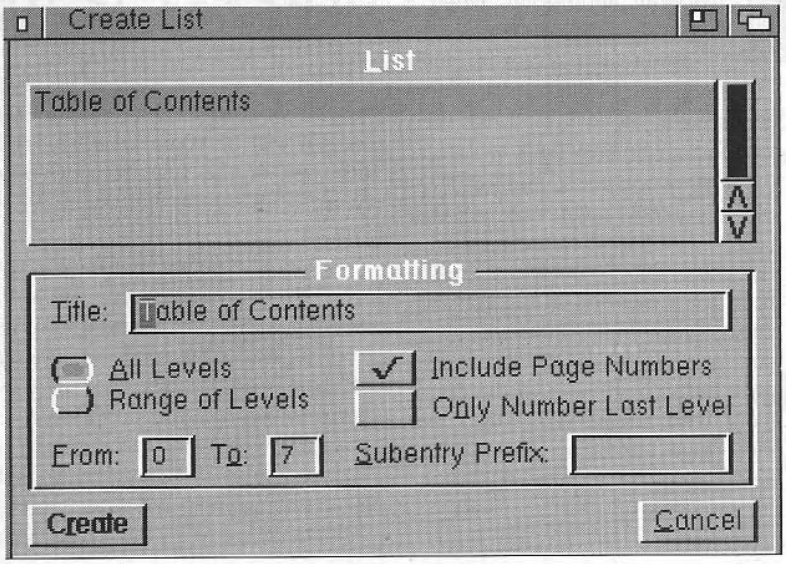
You can then click on the very top or the bottom of the document and type the text to be put on each page. The header (top of the page) can be the title of the document and perhaps the author in a font equal in size or smaller than the one used in the main body of text.

Footers are best for page numbers; simply typing "Page" then insert the page number (insert menu). Now every page has a small title so the reader doesn't forget what they're looking at, and a computer generated page number at the bottom.

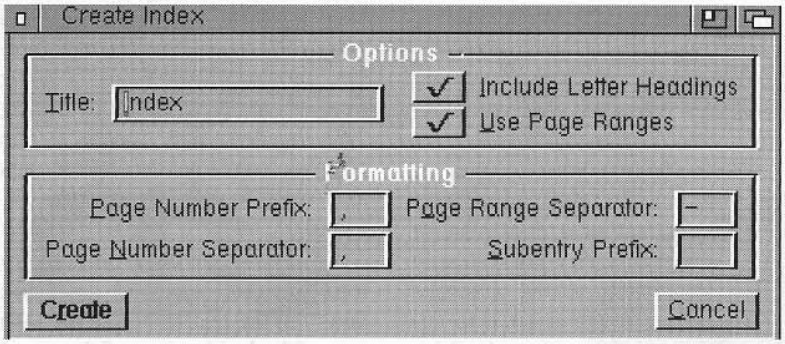
Bookmarks, Endnotes and List Entries

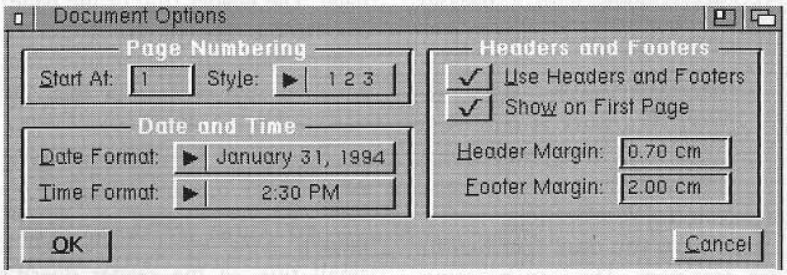
Assuming you have a piece of text with some form of chapter structure, you can get Wordworth to nicely separate chapters and construct a table of contents for you. Chapters should be separated by a page break (insert menu). This makes sure each chapter starts on a fresh page; you can also do this by playing a drum solo on the return key, but if you edit text before that chapter it'll end up misformatted.

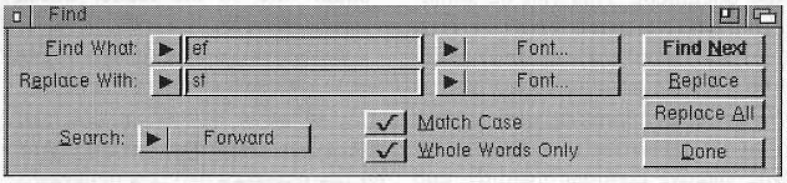
You can jump directly to the start of any chapter using the goto tool. But first, you have to tell

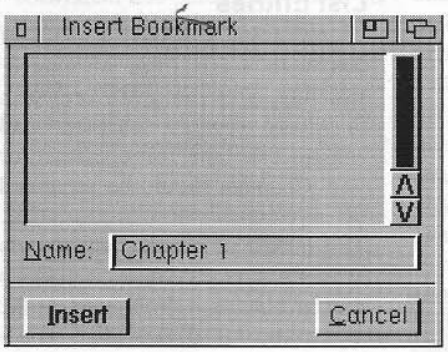


***Left:** Creating a contents page.*









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Top to bottom: *1) creating an index page 2) document options 3) find and replace 4) Inserting a bookmark.*

Wordworth where the chapters are and give each one a name. This is most commonly done by placing the text insertion point at the desired part of the document, selecting Edit/Insert and then Insert Bookmark. Give the bookmark an appropriate name - Chapter 1, or whatever.

Endnotes operate in much the same fashion; you insert an endnote, name it, and can then Edit/Goto your way back to it.

If your document requires a table of contents page, fear not; that can be automated as well. Insert a list entry where you feel there's a need for a mention in the contents page. Tools/Create List, and away you go. Wordworth will insert a page at the beginning of the document with all the list entries and their page numbers. Indexing can be done much the same way.

Columns

Depending on what size paper the document is printed on and what sort of document it is, you may want to use columns of text. In some cases columns look great and make the text easier to read, which is why they're used in magazines and newspapers. Play around with different numbers of columns and see how they look with your chosen font and text.

Another commonly used feature is hyphenation. Along with fully justified text, hyphenation makes text look as if it's more controlled, by keeping the spacing between characters and words the same. Wordworth's hyphenation feature is pretty good, and I suggest you use it if you have no philosophical objections to the concept (don't laugh, I've had people insist that I print their document out again without hyphenation because it offends them).

The Finished Product

I strongly recommend that you skim through your document looking for punctuation and typographical errors before you let the spell checker loose on it. This will filter out a lot of rubbish that the checker picks up and annoys you with, and also help you find errors that spell checkers don't detect - their instead of they're, and so on.

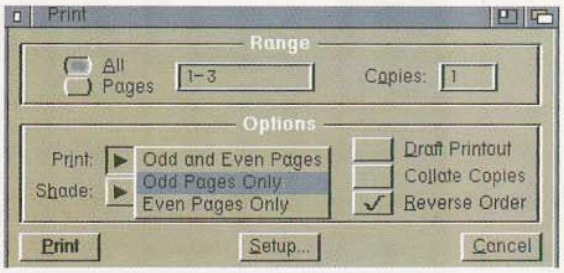
This is a good habit to get into if you want to produce documents which will be taken seriously, and it's one of the few things Wordworth can't fully help you with, yet.

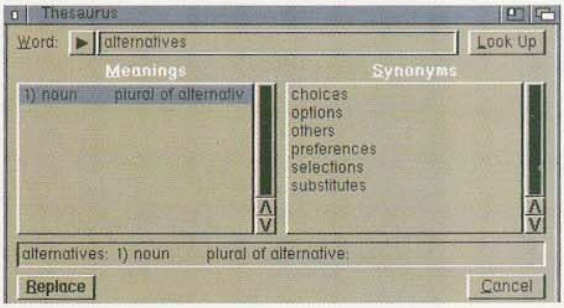
One more thing that may assist you in the construction of well written documents is the thesaurus tool. It works by searching a bank of words and giving you alternatives to a word you don't want to use, for whatever reason. Just select the word in question and then Tools/Thesaurus, and you'll see a selectable list of all the words with

similar meanings. Assuming you're printing on ordinary A4 paper, you can enable the facing pages option and the margins will be mirrored onto the even pages just like a real book.

If you have a sheet feeder, it's quite a simple task to produce pages with text on both sides. When you print, select odd pages in the print menu and Wordworth will only print pages 1, 3, 5 and so on. After that's finished, take the stack of pages, load them in your sheet feeder backwards (make sure they're the right way up...) and tell Wordworth to print all the even pages. This two-sided document can now be bound or stapled together and admired by all.

Top to bottom:
1) printing odd pages
2) Thesarus at work.





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In an upcoming magazine I hope to write a Helpline-style article, answering readers' questions about Wordworth. So if you've got a problem or a query, send it to me at:

PO Box 443,
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❑

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The Web of SIN...

- now that I've got your attention

By Daniel Rutter

What, exactly, the effect of the Internet's burgeoning popularity will be on the life of Joe Average is beyond anybody's estimation. I certainly don't know what sort of weird and wonderful things we'll be doing with networked computing devices in 20 years. But there are plenty of people out there who are willing to take a stab at predicting the future or, at least, saying what they think ought to happen and why, and quite a few of them popped up at the recent Asia Pacific World Wide Web '95 conference, staged at Sydney's Darling Harbour from the 18th to the 21st of September.

Among the speakers at the conference were a number of academics from Charles Sturt University (mentioned, in passing, last month), who had some interesting things to say about where the Web is going.

The speech that interested me most was by Professor David Green, who spoke on the way the Web SHOULD go in order to become a really useful, reliable source of information. The problem at the moment is that the Web is dominated by people with something to sell - or at least to promote. And this does not promote the creation of useful online info-sources.

At the moment, most Web sites are aiming to be what Green calls "honeypots" - sites that snare the merry websurfer with interesting trinkets. You know the sort of thing - some funny text files, links to Cool Place. The theory - and it's

a sound one - is that if your site is a fun place to be then people will check out what you're actually trying to bring to their attention, as well as enjoying the icing.

But this is not the way to make a useful info-web. Public libraries don't offer video games and pool tables, just books, lots of 'em, well organised and easy to access. We need the same thing on the Web. And ten thousand sites all setting up their own links to 100 Reasons Kirk's Better Than Picard are not achieving that.

A further problem is that without any organised accumulation and evaluation of information, you can't rely on what you find. Generally speaking, info on the Internet is accurate - but how do you know? Nobody's accountable, you've never seen the person that created the document you're reading and you don't even know if that's his real name - are you sure you trust this guy to tell you the right way to pack your parachute?

The ideal, according to Green, is Special Interest Networks, or SINs. A SIN is a group of cooperating sites, all associated with one subject. None of this all-things-to-all-folks nonsense that's currently being tried, just clearly delineated subject areas, with data libraries, communications, the opportunity to publish your own info on the subject, and other related services. You can thus find everything you need on one subject in one place - and, if the system works, the information you find will be high in

both quantity and quality, with ill-proofed data and self-serving statistics stamped out by peer review. Such a service already exists, in CompuServe, but CompuServe's considerable abilities still can't match the scope, accessibility and cheapness of Internet communication.

While SINs, or equivalent, differently named entities, aren't popular yet, that could change practically overnight, given the Web's explosive growth rate. There are already some embryonic attempts at the concept; Charles Sturt Uni has its own page dedicated to the subject, at http://life.csu.edu.au/sin/.

For more info on the CSU Web conference speeches, contact the CSU Media Office on (069) 33 1067.

Cheap calls

The major international telecommunications carriers may or may not be uneasily loosening their collars over the threat of people using their Internet links for long distance phone calls. Personally, I think the telecom companies stand to make a lot more from the global Net-mania than they stand to lose.

The idea of Net-phoning's simple enough. Digitise a voice at one end, use one of the high-powered compression systems now available to squish it down, send it in real time to the other end - where the same thing is happening. Result - international phone call, but cheaper - all it costs is whatever you're paying for your connection to your Internet service provider. There's certainly a market out there for this technology, and at the moment Quarterdeck and CompuServe are both trying for a slice of it with their own products - Quarterdeck's WebPhone includess with their spiffy Quarterdeck Mosaic browser, CompuServe's is integrated with their Compuserve Information Software. And Amiga users can do it too, with AmiPhone, reviewed in Hot PD this month.

As things stand, net-phoning and similar high-powered Internet applications look set to bog down systems only just coming to terms with picture-laden Web pages. But, as all computer users discover sooner or later, everything gets faster all the time.

CompuServe news

CompuServe has an Electronic Mall - a secure online credit card shopping precinct which is not as useful for Australians as it is for Americans but makes for an interesting browse nonetheless. Well, it would have, except for the fact that it used to cost money just to look.

Realising the folly of charging admission to a mall, CompuServe have made the service completely free. If you don't buy anything, wandering the Electronic Mall won't cost you a penny - not even for connect time. It would, of course, be taking advantage of CompuServe to use the Mall as a handy free-parking spot to visit when you need to leave the computer for a few minutes (the service will log you off if you don't do anything for a quarter hour). So don't do that.

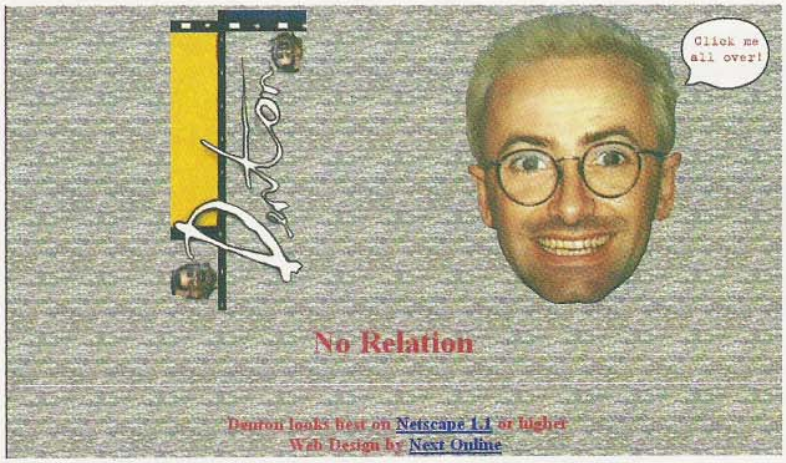
Contact Fujitsu, who handle CompuServe's Australian branch, on (02) 410 4260 for more information.

Cheaper Enternet access

If you use NetComm's connect.com Internet service provider, you'll now be paying less. As of the end of September, NetComm have reduced the rates to $7.50 an hour in the peak period - 9AM to 9PM weekdays and Saturdays. It's $5 an hour for the lower demand time on either side - 9PM to midnight Monday to Saturday, 7 to 9 in the morning weekdays, and 11AM to midnight Sundays.

If you are a sane and normal member of society such as me and

Right: *The Metro site - note funky layout.*



Top to bottom: *1) Such a pretty boy 2) Dissolution of Western Society, Exhibit B.*

do your surfing from midnight to 7AM on weekdays, you'll be paying a mere $2.50 an hour. The same bargain basement rate applies to midnight to 9AM surfing on Saturdays, and midnight to 11AM on Sundays.

Call NetComm on (02) 888 5533 for more information.

The 19th

- http://www.19th. com.au/

The 19th (that's what it's called, all right? I don't name 'em, I just report on 'em) - is billed as Global Digital Marketing. The site itself can be charitably described as stylish or uncharitably as pretentious, and it features PR information for a grand total of five people. Hey, give 'em time. If you're interested in trompe l'oeil paintings or the chance to buy a 1959 Tiger Moth, this is the place to go.

Why am I mentioning it? Well, the site was entirely produced with Amigas. It looks unremarkable. Contact the administrators on (074) 65 4377 for direct person-to-person audio-type interaction.

Sydney Morning Herald Metro

- http://www.smh.com.au.metro/

The Sydney Morning Herald's Metro section, the Friday supplement, recently went all cyber. Never mind that a typographical error in the first issue meant the Web address didn't make it to print; they're over that now, and with Hip Young Thangs wherever you look and of course the usual pile of news and views on what's happening 'round town, man, Metro has lifted its game considerably.

I checked out the site, and was mightily impressed. Interesting articles, fabulous layout, and a whole load of really cool links. Hey, any site that allows you to discover that Take That did, or more correctly attempted, a cover of Smells Like Teen Spirit at at least one of their Australian shows gets the thumbs up from me.

Denton page

- www.next.com.au/denton/

While I'm yammering about the popular media, how about that wacky Andrew Denton chappie. If the Thursday night dose of Denton just ain't enough for you (and let's face it, that nasty timeslot clash with Deep Space Nine means I for one miss chunks of the show), try the Web site.

If you had by some strange method developed the belief that Andrew Denton's face is attractive, any such suspicions will be drummed from your mind after the ninth time you view it on the site's lucky-dip main page. I used to be under the impression that people look better when they smile. I am no longer.

It's impossible to accurately navigate to any part of this site

without typing in pre-learned addresses, but I doubt you're there as part of a serious research project so such sloppiness can be viewed as artistic rather than annoying. There's lots of cool stuff, and it's well updated too. Check it out.

The last Denton show to run as I type this was the 50's one (Lardy Cakes, fish custard... with me now? Good). This show featured Amanda Keller sampling some dumb Net sites. I was hot on her heels, and am glad to present more details on a couple.

Mr Edible Starchy Tuber Head

http://winnie.acsu.buffalo.edu/potatoe/

For people that missed the exact location of the invaluable Mr Edible Starchy Tuber Head Home Page (nee Potato head, name changed for trademark-avoidance reasons), here it is. That people have invested effort in creating this page beggars the imagination almost as much as my creeping realisation that I'm now spending time to tell you all about it. It's dumb. It's happy. You can stick different ears on it. Have a look.

Steve Mann

http://www-white.media.mit.edu/~steve/

Here's another site worth visiting, also mentioned by Ms. Keller. This guy was presented on Denton as just a loon, which I suppose he is to some extent, but at least he's a really clever one.

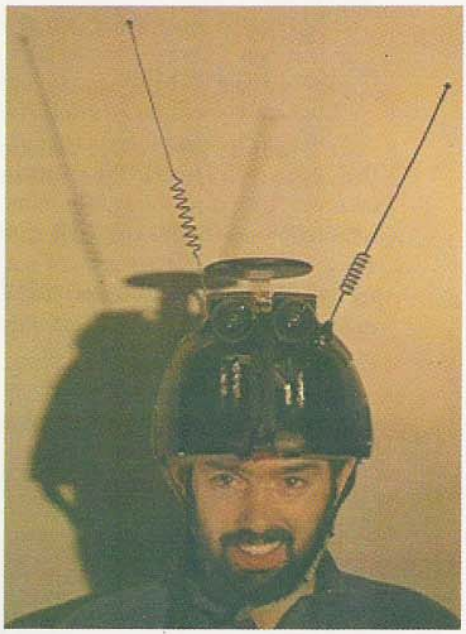
This site contains many pictures, MPEG video and much information from Steve Mann, a more than slightly peculiar resident of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology whose idea of a good time is wearing a stereoscopic camera pair feeding twin viewfinders and hooking the assemblage to the Web, so everyone can see exactly what he sees - even if he's decide to reverse, invert or rotate his view.

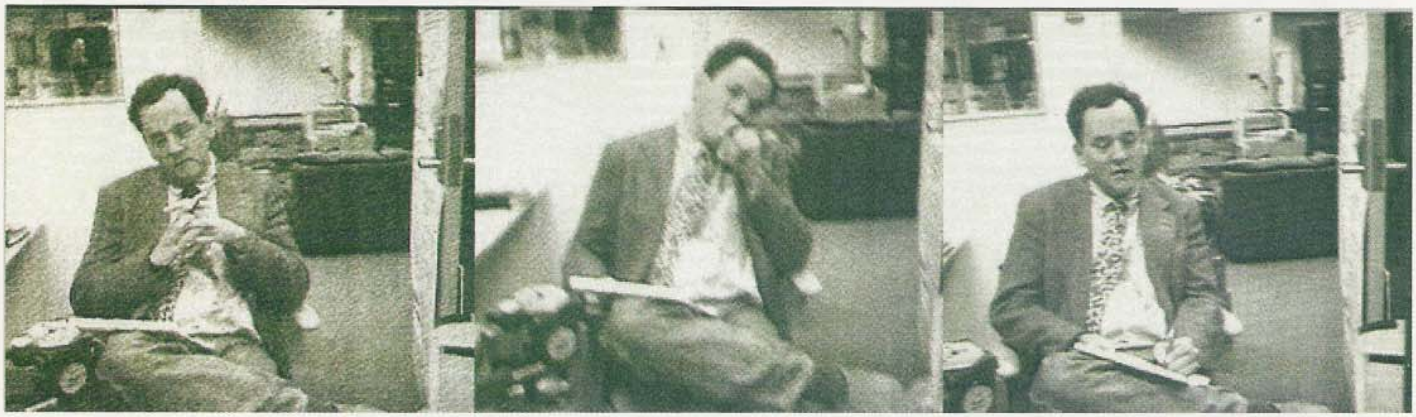
This is actually pretty cool. Mann is playing with the whole invasion-of-privacy idea - you not only see him going about his daily business, but see what he sees as he does so - and at the same time he's working out the bugs in the optical side of telepresence, one of the serious applicaitons of VR. This doesn't make him the World's Sanest Man, but he's far from just a kook.

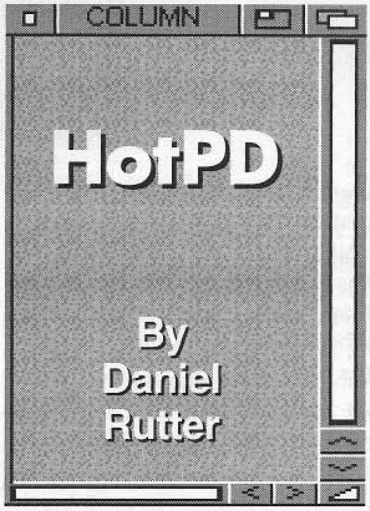
The ideas are off the wall, but the concepts are interesting, and there's piles of background information. This chap knows what he's doing, and is very good at it, and has absolutely no links on his page that show you reconfigurable tuber-based toys. I think that's for the best.

❑

Top to bottom: *1) Steve assures us that this was just an early model. 2) Just because there's a camera on your head, you don't have to look at anything interesting.*







◗ Hello, good evening and welcome to an extra large bumper summer fun edition of Hot PD.

As if two weren't enough, this time there are four companion disks, jam-packed with hip and groovy software. On with the show!

*** New ArcHandler

I haven't mentioned ArcHandler, the nifty shareware program that lets you treat .lha format archives like directories, for nine months or so. In that time it's had a few upgrades - for a start, it's not really a "handler" any more, it's a regular commodity that you can put anywhere.

Aside from the usual bugfixes and sub-surface tweaks, the present 2.0c incarnation of ArcHandler also features independence from the kludgey PIPE device, much faster file extraction, a proper graphical interface, MultiUser FileSystem support, NewIcons for pathological Workbench-decorators, more stable support for archives in archives, and support for starting from ToolManager.

You still can't write to files in archives, but you CAN move, rename and delete them - though this may take ages for big archives - and you can write to non-archive files alongside them, and rename archives.

ArcHandler's shareware ($US20 - the unregistered version always pops up the main window on startup and shutdown and can't save preferences settings - you have to set them manually in the ToolTypes), and in its current incarnation it's worth registering. Check it out!

* DCOMMB

Another one of those tiddly little stocking-filler programs. Run it and the middle button on a three button mouse now does a double left button click. Run it again and it doesn't any more. Complex, huh.

** SysPic

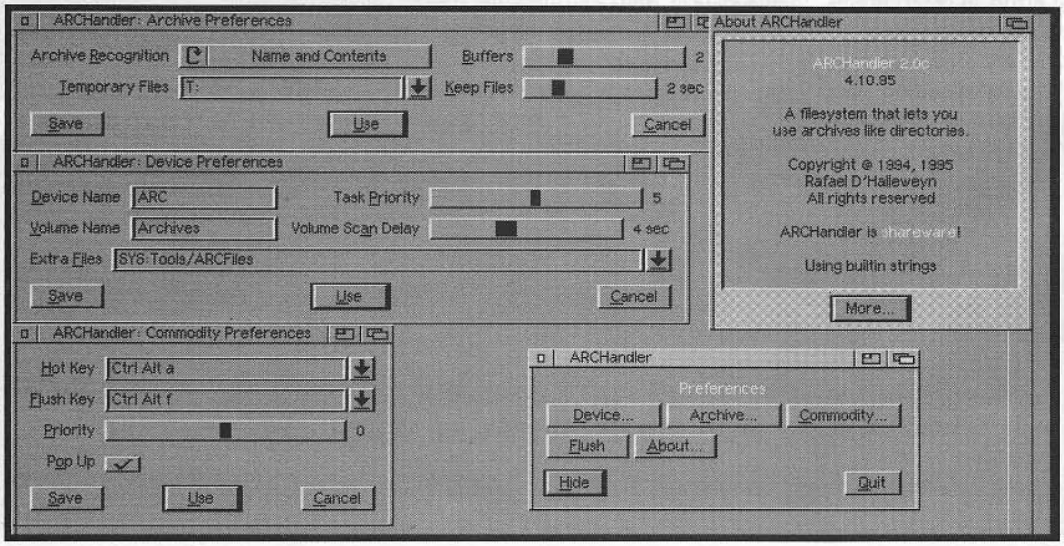
True Amiga Fanatics, those people I wear my Groucho mask at computer shows to avoid, do not believe their life to be tolerable unless their machine displays some funky picture promoting the Amiga or slagging off Windows during startup. Well, they and all who wish to be like them will be pleased to know about the latest version of SysPic, a small, speedy AGA-only boot picture displayer that can show any IFF format image, can keep the picture showing until Workbench has completely finished its startup, can set the overscan prefs early so you don't get an image position hop when IPrefs cuts in, and can show a randomly chosen picture.

I can say, without fear of con-

Program complexity
☆ Any Gammorian
☆☆ Luke
☆☆☆ Emperor Palpatine
☆☆☆☆ Yoda

● ● ● ● ● ● ●

Below: *Much more civilised than it used to be.*



tradiction, that very few people actually need this program. It could come in handy if you've got an Amiga in some computer-TV application where you don't want people to see the system startup, but that's about it; nonetheless, it's well done and all those odd people who recognise me in public should have it.

** AppTrashcan

Pining for a Macintosh-style desktop Trashcan? Here one is. Drag a file to the Trashcan AppIcon and it'll be moved to a "Trashcan" directory on the root of its drive. Select the Empty Trash option from the Tools menu and it's deleted. Any questions? Good.

**** AmiPhone

Choking all available Internet bandwidth is becoming a popular pastime - hey, whenever you fill it up, somebody seems to give you more - and here's an Amiga take on one of the newest ways to (ab)use this wonderful free resource - Internet phone calls.

Here's the deal. An Internet hookup, for most users, costs as much as a local phone call. Via this connection, though, you can exchange data all over the world, without paying a further penny to the phone companies. So rig a digitiser on your computer, talk into a mike, get your voice compressed and packetised and send it to your similarly equipped conversational partner in Oslo. Easy, with the right software - like, for example, AmiPhone.

You need a Workbench 2 Amiga, AmiTCP3.0b or better, a sampler (if you want to transmit) and a 14,400Bps or better Internet connection. And a fast CPU. And someone else to talk to who's also got AmiPhone, as it doesn't work with other Net-phoning systems. But what the hey, it's a cool toy.

* AmyPencil

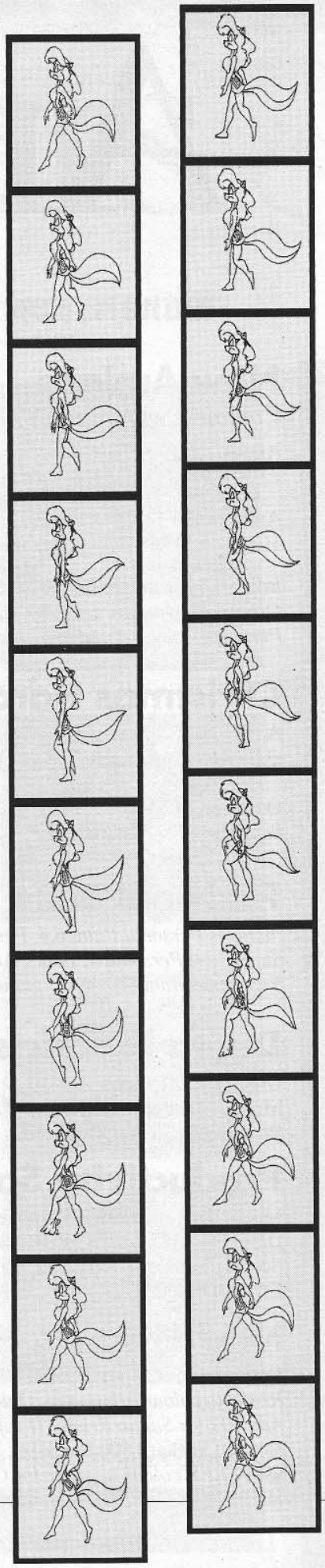
Generally speaking, there are two kinds of computer animator - the kind that get paid to do it, and the kind that aren't any good. Eric Schwartz is one of the rare exceptions; on a good day he can be rather amusing, on a bad day merely mystifying, but there's no doubt that this boy can make good ol' Moviesetter sit up and beg. Eric's responsible for a number of all time classic Amiga animations - the Juggler sequels, the Aerotoons, and, of course, Amy the Squirrel, a furry lass right up there with Jessica Rabbit in the Sexy Toons stakes. Rule of thumb: If it makes you laugh, it's Eric; if it features something with a rego number starting with NCC, it's Tobias Richter.

Collectors of Schwartz oddities will be overjoyed to learn that I've ferretted out what might be a pencil rough of an Amy animation, or might just be a line-arted greyscale version of the old Amy Walks 2, and whacked it on the companion disks. Never before seen, limited edition print, keep and cherish forever, etcetera. Hey, it's small. Check it out.

**** AKCC

What's better than finding a new 'n' useful CLI command? Finding a pile of them in one place! AKCC's a suite of CLI extensions that's been floating around for a while, and the current 3.6 version has lots of muesli for us icon-avoiders.

Highlights of the extra-commands package are AboutCLI, which gives some stats on the current command line; CheckExec for system information and basic virus checking; Display, a text file displayer that can output octal, hex or source code; EnvAct, a powerful environment variable manager; programs to show all resident libraries, semaphores, resources, in-



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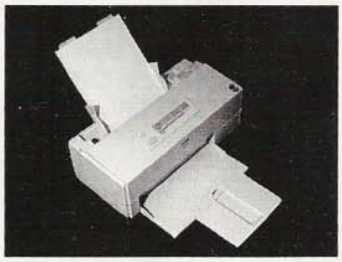

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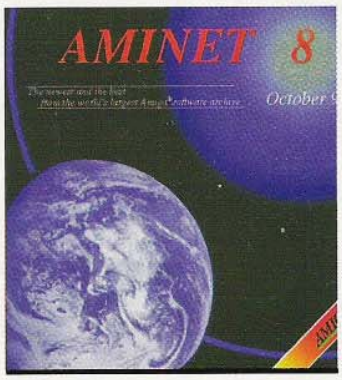

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terrupts, devices, ports and tasks; a hunk displayer for program or object files, that can recognise IFF and other filetypes; a wildcard-supporting task-killer (KillTask * to nuke your system!) and similar priority changer; a decent Move command and a window sizing command. If that's not enough, there's an associated shell-extension program as well, which I smiled indulgently at on my way to the new version of CShell (see below).

**** Break

In the same vein as the AKCC package, only much much much smaller, is this Break command, which is more capable than the AKCC one and so small you could lose it down the side of a Barbie couch - so it's on the companion disks.

**** Csh 5.48

Yup, here we go again. Deem diatribe on Why Everyone Should Use CShell And If You Don't You're Different And Strange included here. I like it. It makes the shell really powerful. It lets you pretend you're using UNIX.

So what's new?

Well, the last version of CShell I reviewed was 5.43, which wan't actually an official update by the usual authors. It wasn't a trojan or a dumb hack or anything, but it wan't part of the canonical series of CShells and that version number's been skipped for the "real" CShell.

There was only one feature of the unofficial CShell I didn't like - it threw away input received while it was starting up. I have Cshell run on every shell I open, and despite making it resident it takes a moment for it to pop up the prompt, and impatient me has by then already typed the name of the directory I want to work in. CShell 5.43 discarded that pre-prompt typing, so I had to type the directory name again. And damn if v5.48 doesn't do the same thing. Rhubarb.

That aside, there aren't any very major changes. Bugfixes and polishing, of course; redirected output files marked as shared instead of exclusive so you can read the output as it's generated; MultiUser FileSystem support; OS3.1-compliant error messages; you get the idea. There are enough bugfixes to make the upgrade worthwhile.

** Cal

Another weeny program, Cal mimics the UNIX command of the same name that simply prints a calendar of any month in any year to the shell - or, with no arguments, the current month. Yup, looks like this is another of those longwinded descriptions.

*** Fastview

I liked this program the last time I looked at it, and it's got even better.

Recap - Fastview is a speedy, option-rich IFF, GIF, BMP, PCX and JFIF (JPG) viewer for all WB2 or better Amigas. Forget your wussy datatypes; this is all you need for just about all of your picture-wrangling.

Fastview used to have an annoying habit of displaying the name of the file it was currently decoding (it decoded a picture on another screen while showing the last one), not the one you were presently looking at. This made it altogether too much of a mental exercise to decide which of thee pictures you actually wanted to copy, delete or whatever. Now it reduces confusion and chip RAM consumption by only actually opening a screen and showing the name of a file when you hit a key to stop looking at the last one.

Better yet, Fastview doesn't just decode one file in advance - it keeps going, decoding as many pictures in advance as you have RAM for. This is a really spiffy feature I've never seen before which works very well indeed; it means that if you're viewing a series of slow-decoding JPG pictures where you pause for a while on one image, then skip past its boring successor, you'll find the next image in the sequence probably ready and waiting to be displayed - not slowly peeling in from the top of the screen. There's also a greyscale option for even faster viewing.

Along with the inevitable fixes and twiddles, there's a FORCEAGA keyword for use with 24 bit cards to persuade Fastview to use modes the machine thinks it can't display; a COMMAND option to let you perform a given command on a picture (copying it somewhere, for example) when you hit TAB while viewing it, with Shift-Delete automatically deleting the current pic, and 20% faster scaling. And the executable's even smaller - down around the 23k mark!

Fastview is still slower at displaying JPEGs than good ol' FastJPEG, but it's faster than it was, and it still strides away from the field for everything else. This is the picture viewer to use. Use it.

* MegaTron

Disney kicked off the computer graphic movie genre with the venerable Tron (all of the graphics were greyscale rendered on the Monster Machines of the time and hand coloured), and it seems every budding programmer must pay homage to the Daddy Of 'Em All by writing another blooming light cycles game.

MegaTron is not a bad version. Up to ten players, all of which can be computer controlled, with up to seven humans if you've got a four

player joystick adaptor, nine weapons and tools, adjustable speed and various other trimmings make it about as fun as this antiquated game genre gets. It's uncrippled shareware.

*** PIP

Where would we be without Workbench hacks? Most computers can only manage a lame magnifying glass or two, or one of those eyes-looking-at-the-mouse-pointer jobbies, but the Amiga's rotten with silly programs to make your Workbench into a dripping, morphing, Lemming-infested roach farm. PIP, or Picture-In-Picture, has the disturbing quality of actually maybe being some good for something.

PIP opens a window on Workbench, or any other public screen, and shows a miniature version of another screen, so you can monitor the status of another program without flicking screens. Of course, Amiga screen flipping is the quickest, simplest way to flick between programs yet devised, but everyone wants to make a better mousetrap. And PIP doesn't handle different fonts and screens with different numbers of colours very well. And it's a chip RAM hog. Hey, it's a Workbench hack. If it screws up your machine, it's carrying on a proud tradition.

** SmartWB

Where would we be without system acceleration patches? I'm a sucker for anything that promises a .04% decrease in SCSI reselection times during periods of high relative humidity - heck, I once put a 68010 in my Amiga - so if a system accelerating patch actually does something noticeable, I'm overjoyed.

And SmartWB does.

The way it works is simple. By default, Workbench opens its windows in simple-refresh mode. When something covers a simple-refresh window full of icons, and then it gets moved or closed or resized or otherwise makes the icons visible again, Workbench laboriously draws all of the icons back in again, as if the window had just been opened.

Now, for a couple of icons you're not going to notice the difference, but when you've got a heap of windows open and you're shuffling them around things get pretty sluggish. It saves on the ol' memory, so it's suited to owners of 1Mb Amigas, but the rest of us could do with something better.

SmartWB simply patches the system to open windows in smart-refresh mode, so windows remember what they used to look like and automatically redraw the appropriate areas when required, without reconstructing themselves.

SmartWB is simple, and subtle, but it works, and nothing crashes because it only tries to patch ordinary windows, not custom windows opened by programs. Get it. Use it.

*** SVG Datatype

DO you need an SVG datatype? Probably not. After all, how many people need to view Superview-library's proprietary graphic format, even if it does have XPK and PowerPacker support? Well, if you don't want it, tough. It's not very big, so it's on the companion disks.

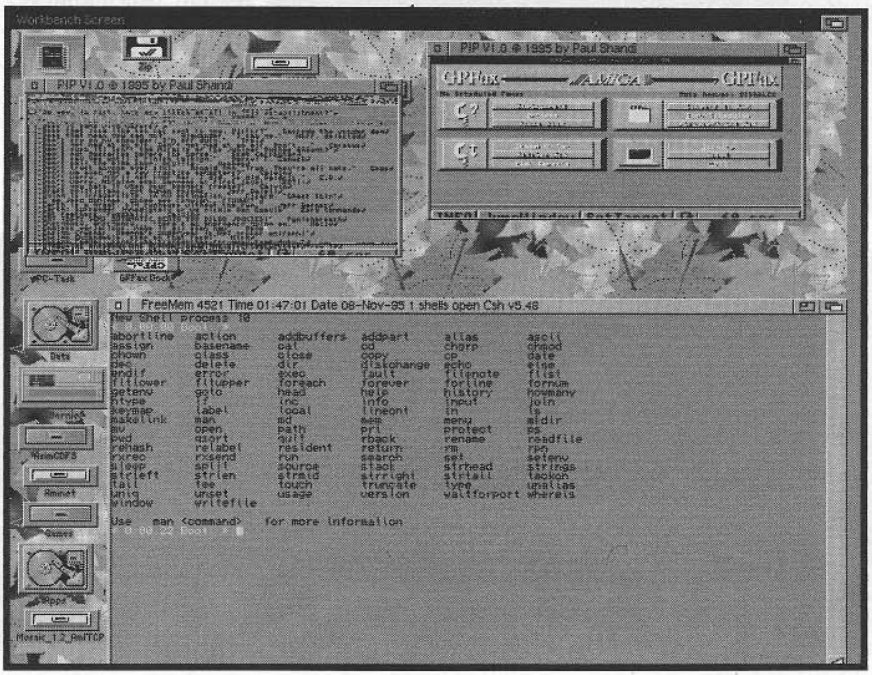
* Serious Backgammon

From Tower Software, makers of fine shareware games for a while now, comes Serious Backgammon, easily the best computer backgammon game I've played. I remember not understanding the true, insane complexity of blackjack until I'd tinkered with the redoubtable computer version back on Fish 427, and Serious Backgammon gave me the same feeling.

Among the many options is the ability to play domino backgam-

● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●

Below: *A couple of PIPs in action.*

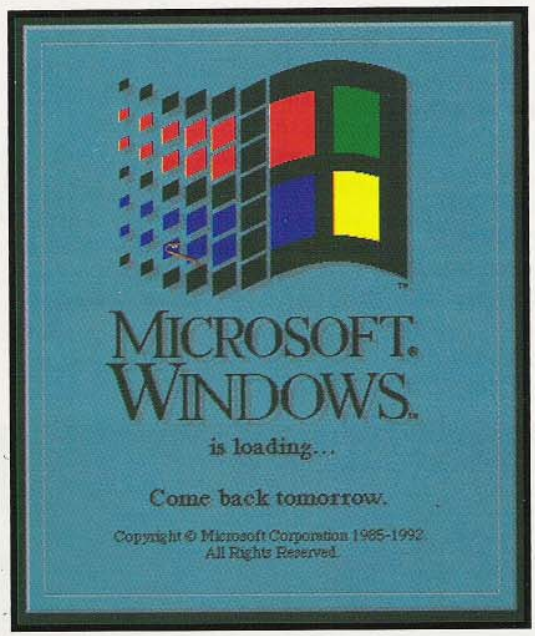


mon. Regular dice backgammon is an OK game, but there's quite a lot of luck involved. Domino backgammon is less random - each player gets a series of sets of 12 dominoes to use one by one as his "dice", so the only moment when chance takes a hand is when the new dominos get laid out. Or whenever you make a move, if you're an unscientific player like me. There's online help for all players - from beginning which-way-do-I-go-ers to nefarious, scheming gammon-hunters. If you're flummoxed you can ask for a hint, and you can change the cosmetics around as you like.

Maybe Serious Backgammon doesn't have everything - but it's got a heck of a lot more than I thought backgammon covered. Ancient variants, rule options, even different looking tables - not to mention all the usual stuff like variable computer intelligence and computer versus computer games.

This is a cool game. Worth having, and worth paying the £12.99 shareware fee for - even if it didn't keep popping up a reminder window.

Below: *One of SysPic's witty bundled startup screens.*
Bottom left + right: *Serious Backgammon may look simple... but it ain't.*



*** AutoAssign

AutoAssign's another in the long line of assign managers that spring up when programmers get sick of the 103 Assign... lines bulking out their user-startup. But AutoAssign takes a different tack from most.

The assign manager I use is a dinosaur called MultiAssign (available back on HotPD 4!), which gets all of its assigns from a single text file and is hence much faster than doing all of 'em one at a time. AutoAssign has a similar data file, but it only bothers to actually make the assigns when something actually looks for one of them. This reduces the infestation of irrelevant assigns for programs that aren't actually running, and saves a bit of RAM (made up for by AutoAssign's mighty 8k bulk...) and a lot of clutter.

A big selling point - AutoAssign can do the same trick with mounts, not mounting odd devices until you want them and not making you separately mount them yourself. Cool. Worth having.

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All of the software mentioned in this column is available on the four companion disks, HotPD29 a, b, c and d. You also get CheckItOut, reviewed separately elsewhere in the magazine! The four disks together will set you back a mere $17 including postage - better than 10% off the price of a pair of the old two disk companion sets. That's right, shoppers - the more you spend, the more you save! It all makes sense, doesn't it? Ring 1800 252 879 now to reserve your copy!

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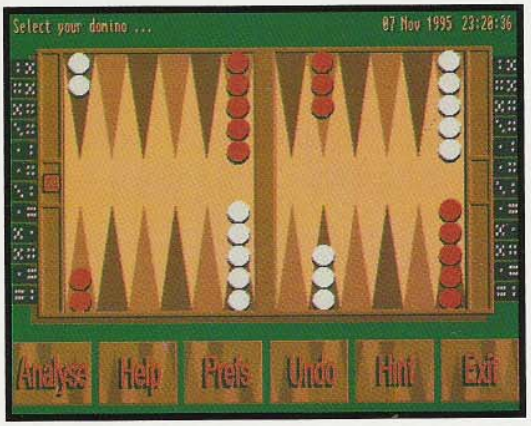

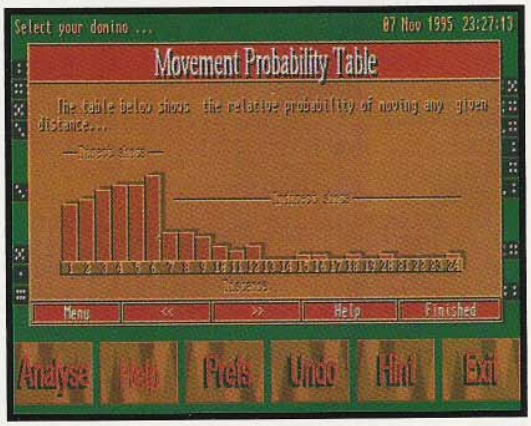

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Software Review

Invisible Images in Final Writer

. . . when what you don't see is what you get.

By David Plunkett

Drawing is not one of my strong points. In these politically correct times, I might even be described as "artistically challenged". For this reason, the drawing tools that come with many wordprocessors give me feelings of awe and dread.

Awe, because I've seen some of the amazing things that can be done with them by people with creative minds; dread, because all I can produce are complicated geometric shapes that serve little purpose.

Until now, that is. You see, I've found that, sometimes, the maxim "a picture is worth a thousand words", can be true of graphic images that you can't even see.

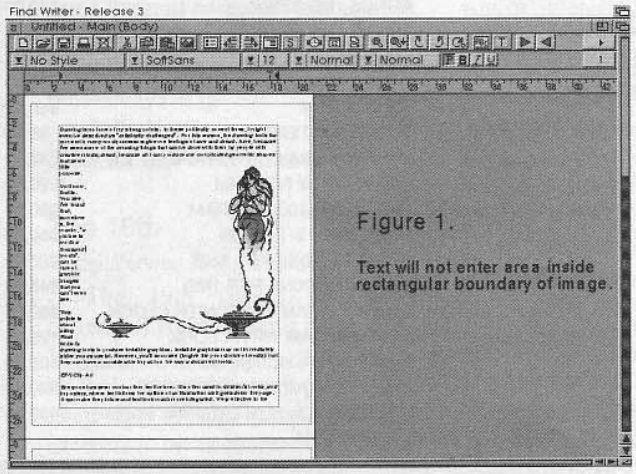
This article is about using Final Writer's drawing tools to produce invisible graphics. Invisible graphics may not immediately strike you as useful. However they can have a considerable impact on the way a document looks.

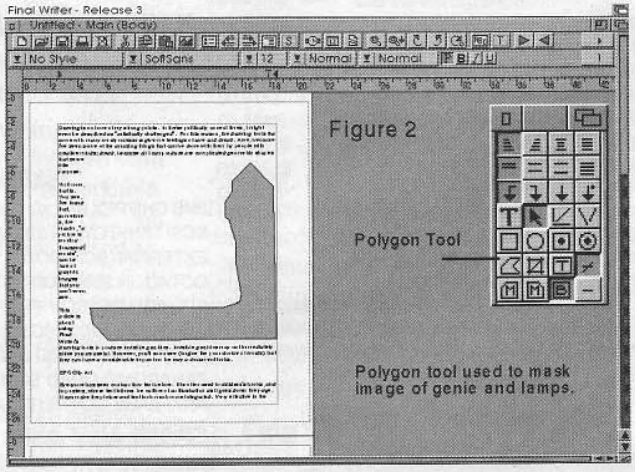
EPS Clip Art

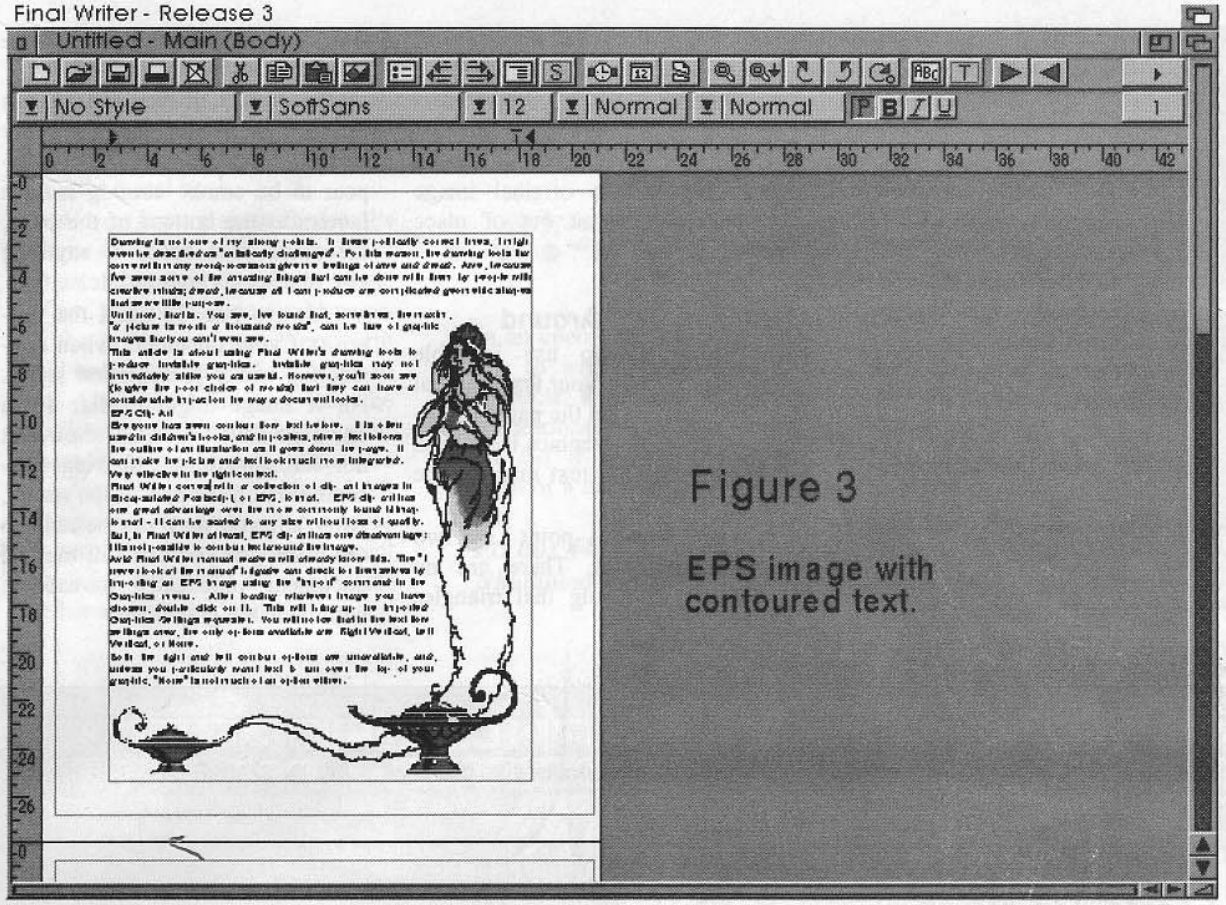
Everyone has seen contour flow text before. It's often used in children's books, and in posters, where text follows the outline of an illustration as it goes down the page. It can make the picture and text look much more integrated, and is very effective in the right context.

Final Writer comes with a collection of clip art images in Encapsulated Postscript, or EPS, format. EPS clip art has one great advantage over the more commonly found bitmap format - it can be scaled to any size without loss of quality. But, in Final Writer at least, EPS clip art has one disadvantage: it is not possible to contour text around the image.

Avid Final Writer manual read-







ers will already know this. The "I never look at the manual" brigade can check for themselves by importing an EPS image using the "Import" command in the Graphics menu.

After loading whatever image you have chosen, double click on it. This will bring up the Imported Graphics Settings requester. You will notice that in the text flow settings area, the only options available are Right Vertical, Left Vertical, or None.

Both the right and left contour options are unavailable, and, unless you particularly want text to run over the top of your graphic, "None" is not much of an option either.

This leaves the two Vertical settings. These make the text flow down the side of the invisible rectangular frame enclosing the graphic. While it's often quite an acceptable effect, sometimes, as in Figure1, it's woeful. In this example, the reverse "L" shape of the image gives rise to a large block that can't (using the vertical text flow settings) be entered by normal text. The result is a conspicuous area of white space.

Now, this may be just the effect you were looking for. But, if it isn't, you can still make the text contour flow around the image, despite what the manual says. How? Enter the invisible graphic.

Using the polygon graphic tool, you can draw an irregular shape that tightly hugs the outline of the image. Begin at any point on the image, and use the mouse to work your way around. The polygon will complete itself when you click back on the starting point. Figure 2 shows how this looks, and an enlarged view of the polygon icon used to activate the tool.

Double clicking on the polygon will bring up its Graphics Settings Requester. This time, however, the contour options are available. Select Left Contour. Now make the graphic invisible by turning off any border setting, and making the image transparent (instead of solid). Select "Okay" to exit the requester.

The next step is to change the text flow settings on the EPS image. Bring up the Graphics Setting Requester, and change the text flow setting to "none". (If you're having trouble selecting the EPS image instead of the polygon, remember that the large white space shown in Figure 1 is also part of the EPS image. Clicking some-

where there will select it, without requiring you to change the layering order of the images on the document.)

Once these changes are made, the text will happily scrawl all over the EPS graphic until it comes up against the invisible polyblob thingy that has been plastered over the bits you do want to see. The net effect is shown in figure 3: an EPS image, with text flowing nicely down the side.

When working with two or more graphic objects like this, it's often useful to get Final Writer to treat them all as one item. Simply select both objects - click on each in turn while holding down the shift key - then use the "Group" command in the Graphics menu.

Grouping the objects allows them to be moved and resized easily, without worrying about leaving stray bits of the original image "uncovered" by an out of place mask.

Pushing Text Around

You can also use invisible graphics to make your text map out a chosen shape on the page. In figure 4, invisible graphics have been used to make the text map out the shape of an X.

The starting point is two columns of text. There are no prizes for guessing that triangles were then used to push the columns into the desired shape.

The range of shapes you can produce is limited only by your imagination. Your text could appear to be smoke coming from a lantern at the bottom of the page, the shape of a head, or anything else that seems appropriate.

Always bear in mind the purpose of your document when considering tricky presentation styles. An X image might be fine for a one page advert for a TV show, but not for something requiring concentration on the part of the reader. After all, you may not be able to see them, but you can still make a document practically unreadable with invisible graphics!

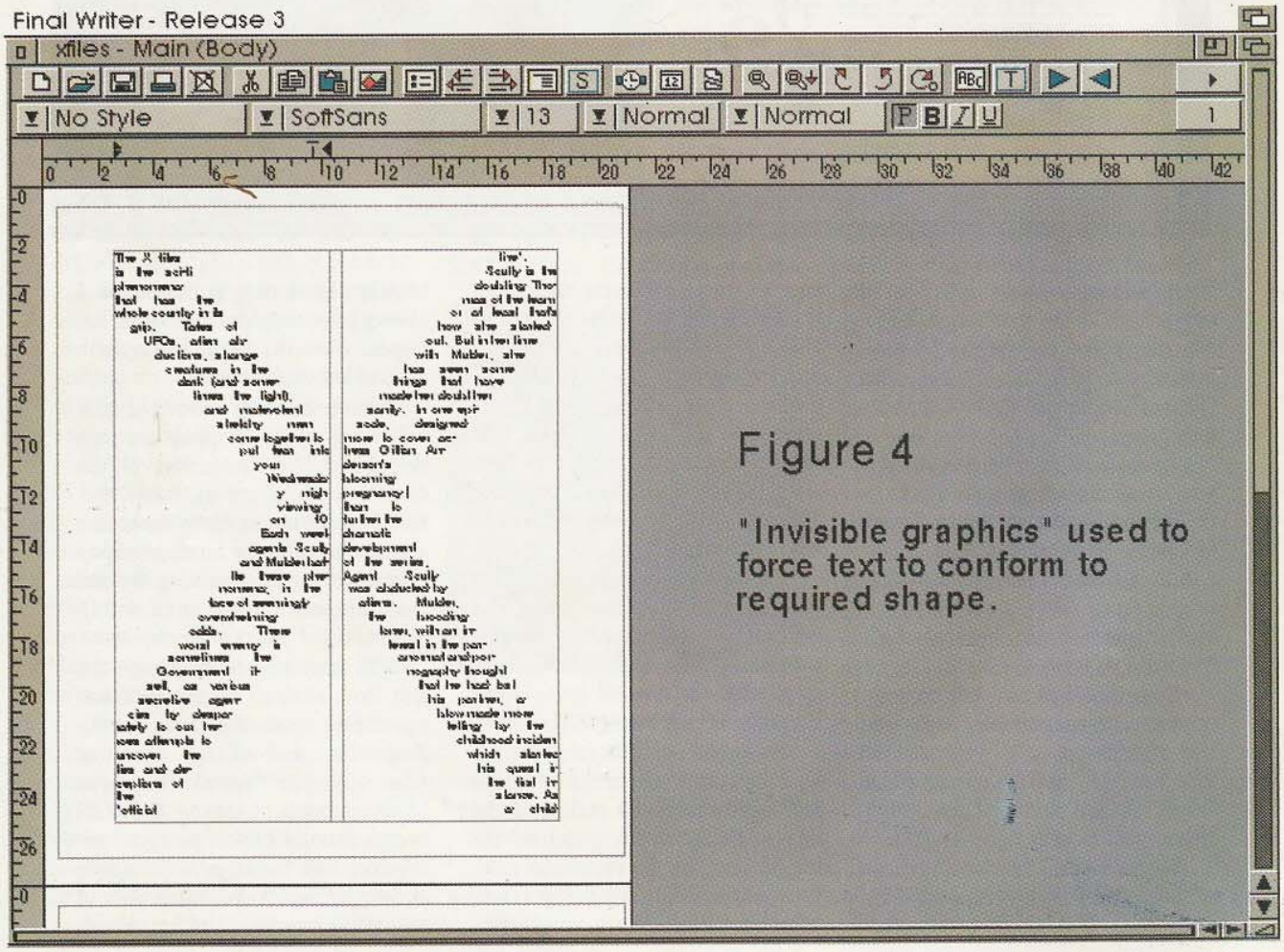


Figure 4

"Invisible graphics" used to force text to conform to required shape.

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Make your own CDs

By Daniel Rutter

In the last Amiga Review I looked at CD-Write,a package that lets you appear to write to CD-ROM disks by using a clever filesystem and patch files stored on the hard disk.

This month I'm into the hard stuff. Proper, genuine, honest-to-goodness CD writing. Gentlemen, open your chequebooks.

Money, money, money...

There was a time, not long ago, when writing CDs was a pastime for the very very rich. At better than $10,000 for a writable CD drive, you needed to be very enthusiastic indeed about creating your own CD-ROMs.

These days, though, CD writers are a lot more reasonably priced - under $3000. And at least some of them work with Amigas. And you don't actually need to own a writer yourself - just a big hard drive and a bigger Amiga. Read on.

The key to Amiga CD mastering is the only program for the purpose available on this machine - MasterISO from AsimWare, the same people who make the excellent AsimCDFS CD-ROM file system. MasterISO is the package that does the gruntwork involved in mastering an ISO-9660 standard CD-ROM - it takes a load of files and turns them into an ISO-9660 CD image file, which it can then copy to a CD writer. Alternately, MasterISO can write the CD image data direct to a SCSI device, obliterating its existing formatting information but giving you a drive you can unplug and take to a CD mastering bureau, where the data can be fed to their CD writer without the word Amiga ever needing to be mentioned.

The biggest restriction for hopeful CD masterers is that MasterISO wants you to be running some pretty macho Amiga hardware. Owners of anything less than an A4000/030 with 1.3Gb of free hard disk space, 16Mb RAM and a SCSI-2 controller need not apply; it may be possible to run the package on, say, a 68040 WB3.1 A3000 with similar specs, but I wouldn't make any bets.

Why such demanding requirements? Well, when you're writing to a CD you don't get the chance to make one mistake. Buffers to absorb read/write speed discrepancies can help, but if the CD wants the next byte in the series and the computer doesn't have it handy yet, the disc is toast.

I tested MasterISO on a 40MHz 68040 A4000 with a pile of RAM and a 2.1Gb Quantum Empire SCSI-2 drive, Pinnacle RCD-1000 double speed writer and Oktagon SCSI-2 board. The Oktagon is not one of the controllers listed in the MasterISO manual, but it worked fine, once I'd worked around some mystifying SCSI problems. I set the system up with 10Mb of buffer memory, since the machine had enough to spare, and during writes the buffer never dropped below 95% full (when the buffer empties, you're in trouble). The situation would probably have been less comfortable if I was trying to use a faster CD writer, but half an hour a disc's all right with me.

Dodgy software

I'm a great fan of AsimCDFS, because it's well thought out, well coded and well documented. The same cannot, however, be said of

MasterISO. It's plain that AsimWare know the Amiga CD mastering market's not big enough to justify busting a gut over the software; MasterISO has the important stuff and minimal trimmings.

Building an ISO-9660 image makes you feel as if you're already writing to the CD; you can't put stuff into the image file, take it out again and add new things. All of the files you want to make into your CD image must be simultaneously available to the machine building the file - if you're putting the contents of a pile of removable disk carts onto CD you can do it by giving each one a unique name and swapping when requested, but if you've got the storage space it's a better idea to copy all the stuff onto one device, because MasterISO can't deal with identically named directories being sent to the same place in its image file. If this looks half-baked to you, you're right; MasterISO even opens, by default, in interlace mode. Duh.

Mind you, all the basic stuff is here. You can write the various disc-identification fields to the CD - system, volume name, volume set, publisher and so on, you can append version numbers to file names, force upper case and set all of the file dates identically, you can duplicate the file path tables, and you can put info into the 512 byte private data field.

You can even do dummy writes - a "dry run" CD write to test the system - provided your CD drive is compatible with this mode. Incompatible drives are supposed to return an error, but the Pinnacle I tested happily wrote a disc. Ah well.

So MasterISO's usable, but far from elegant. This wouldn't bother me if it didn't carry a hefty price tag. MasterISO retails for $599; for this kind of money I expect a polished product, not something that feels like shareware.

But no matter. MasterISO is the only Amiga package in the race. And it works.

Yo ho ho...

MasterISO can be used to copy or construct audio and data CDs; AsimCDFS can easily read any data CD to an ISO-9660 data file in one step and MasterISO can dump that very same file back to a writable disc. Commercial-scale piracy of data CDs is rife in South-East Asia, where copyright is viewed as an amusing notion for crazy foreigners, and the dropping price of CD writers and hefty tags on commercial CD titles make the cottage-industry version it an attractive, but illegal, idea. Of course, if you want to run off a half dozen copies of your company's multimedia showreel or some other CD title you own the rights to, doing green-disc versions is a cheap alternative to high minimum run commercial duplication.

Criminal duplication of audio CDs, however, isn't really a problem. Blank recordable CDs are so close to the Australian shelf price of pre-recorded discs that bargain hunters will do a lot better to simply buy from the States, unless they're after a compilation or a copy of an unavailable oddity.

And even assuming you're not violating copyright, copying audio CDs isn't easy.

In order to build an audio CD, you need the tracks you want in CDDA format. Now, another of AsimCDFS's nifty features is its ability to read audio tracks from CDs and translate them on the fly to CDDA in such a way that, as far as AmigaDOS is concerned, the CDDA files are right there on a DOS-format disc. It can even do other professional audio formats, like AIFF and MAUD, which MasterISO can deal with too.

But you need a CD-ROM drive that can send digital audio data down the SCSI bus, and not many can do it. Late model NEC 3X drives and their 4X successors, some Toshibas, some Sonys - and not the Pinnacle CD writer, or any other I know of.

So, in order to duplicate audio CDs in the privacy of your own home, you'll need the above-mentioned killer A4000, a CD writer, and a separate CD-ROM drive, whose cost will pale into obscurity against the expense incurred for the other two gadgets.

If you get your CDDA files from elsewhere - if you've got a digital studio, for example, with the ability to output CDDA files from your direct-to-disk recording setup, you can dispense with the compatible CD reader. But normal mortals will need one.

Once you've done all this, it's a doddle to make an audio CD. You can even make a mixed music and data disc, provided you've got a compatible drive - the Pinnacle I tested isn't capable of writing mixed discs. You just pick the files and show MasterISO where you want them to be, and have a cuppa while it writes the disc. Unless you're using a Philips CDD-521, in which case you have to make sure the underbuffered CD writer's on a different SCSI controller to the drive supplying the file.

One thing you can't do is multisession writes, a la Photo CD. If you've written to a disc, even if you've only written 1K, that's it. No more goes on.

Overall

It's not cheap, it's not dead simple, and MasterISO is a pretty rough product for the money. But hey, it works.

Contact Natdisc on (02) 544 1874 for more information. MasterISO $599, Pinnacle RCD-1000 CD writer $2900, blank CDs around $25.

❑

You'll be further dismayed to learn that upgrading the 68EC030s that drive the later models of cheap A4000 is, notoriously, not possible. You might, maybe maybe, be able to do it, but it'd involve major rewiring and the services of a surface mount rework station and operator, which would end up costing you amazing amounts of money. This is why everybody was highly disgruntled when this machine came out, without the CPU-on-a-card that let you upgrade the earlier models and without even a decent CPU.

IDE in A500

I have recently upgraded my A1200 to a 250Mb hard drive. I have retained the original 40Mb drive. I also have my original A500 v6A fitted with WB 1.3, and a standard 512k expansion.

Can I adapt the old 40Mb IDE drive from the A1200 for internal or external use with the A500? If so, what procedure is required, and where will I be able to get the part? I have reasonable soldering and assembling skills - would the adapting have to be done by a more qualified person?

Graeme Beard, Petrie Qld

Dr Help: *Not at all, Graeme; what you're after is an old ICD AdIDE controller, specifically an AdIDE44, to go with your 44 pin cabled 2.5 inch drive (there's another version, the AdIDE40, which has a 40 pin connector for 3.5 inch drives). The controller plugs into your CPU socket, with the 68000 repotted on top of the AdIDE. As it originally sold, the AdIDE44 came with a 20Mb drive - but by now you should have no more trouble getting an AdIDE without a drive than you should have getting one at all. In any case, the AdIDE can handle two drives, so you've got a fighting chance of getting a bundled drive working too.*

The documentation for the AdIDE also covers the sibling AdSCSI board and can hence be confusing; you'll strike the same problem with the support software. Some boards have also proven to have dodgy CPU sockets - see it working before you buy, if possible.

Since the hard drive you're going to use is already Amiga formatted, you should avoid any partitioning nightmares. Just make sure it's already in an A500-legible filesystem - get Workbench 2 for the A500 and you should be able to use standard FastFileSystem - no International, no DirCache. Set the drive up on the A1200 and you should avoid ICD's, uh, novel, drive identification system.

Unfixable drive

I have a problems with the bootable partition of my hard drive. When I turn on my system, I get a message "Volume WORK not validated". After cancelling this, I later get the message "Error validating WORK, block 131884 bad header type", which I cancel twice.

I had a similar problem with a floppy disk recently that I corrected with the FixDisk program. Unfortunately, while this program will recognise my HD partitions and put them in its drive selection gadgets, it won't let me select them.

The problem with the HD prevents me saving to or deleting from the offending partition, and the info line a the top of its window says that it's 100% full when there is only 18Mb out of 128Mb on it.

Can you suggest a solution?

Kingsly Bugarin,
Guildford WA

Dr Help: *I'm not sure why FixDisk doesn't want to look at your corrupt hard disk (which, by the way, is showing the normal symptoms of a filesystem problem the standard validation procedure can't fix); it could be because it's formatted in DirCacheFileSystem or International mode, if you've got an AmigaDOS 3.x machine. Or something. In any case, better disk salvage software should solve the problem for you. In the shareware arena, try Dave Haynie's DiskSalv 2.0 (available from all good PD libraries, bulletin boards and Aminet), or the commercial programs AmiBack Tools and Quarterback Tools Deluxe.*

Black borders

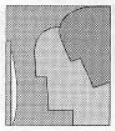
Recently I bought a second hand NEC MultiSync 3D for my Amiga 1200 and am now having a bit of a problem running certain screen modes. Everything is fine using the standard 15KHz driver, but when I switch to either the DBLPAL or MULTISCAN modes, the whole screen shrinks.

I've played with the Overscan Prefs, but they don't push the screen out to the sides enough. There are still these thick black lines down either side. I've played with the horizontal adjustments on the monitor, but even at the maximum setting, the black lines are still there. Is my monitor %*@!ed, or do you think the problem could be in the drivers or something?

Also, whenever my computer crashes and boots up again, it always asks me to insert "Volume Programs" and then after I press cancel, "Volume Games". These partitions are the only two on my second internal HD. Might this be a power supply problem, as I am also running an external drive, 030 accelerator, Squirrel SCSI controller and CD-ROM? Thanks for your help.

Bret Edwards,
Unley SA

Dr Help: *You'll be pleased to know that as far as the monitor problem goes, there's nothing*



wrong with your Amiga, your monitor or your preferences. You'll be displeased to know that you're stuck with the black borders. As far as I know, it's simply not possible for an AGA Amiga to manage an edge-to-edge display with many monitors, and the NEC MultiSync 2 and 3 series monitors are on that list. You can clown around with MonEd all you like - the black borders will still be there. But rest assured that, provided it's in good condition, your 3D is a considerably better built unit than the edge-to-edge Microvitecs that are all the rage these days.

Your weird drive problem would be another one for my Mysterious SCSI Faults basket, were it not happening on an IDE device. My clunky old super-expanded A500 does a vaguely similar trick - some crashes, particularly a really nifty one in which it just reboots of its own accord with no error, cause it to try to boot from its Bernoulli drive, whose carts are not in fact bootable. I'm quite sure there's a reason, but since Scotty isn't handy to figure it out I just reset the beast and forget about it.

It's possible that your weedy A1200 supply is gasping somewhat - especially if you're running the CD-ROM from the 1200 brick as well. If the drives spin up sequentially on a normal boot but do a simultaneous power-suck when the machine crashes it might have something to do with it. I'm inclined, however, to think it's an oddity of the interaction of those particular drives with the A1200's IDE controller; if you're sick of working around it, you could try reversing the master/slave jumpers on the drives and using them the other way around, but that's about all you can do short of getting a new drive. Sorry, but the A1200's a characterful computer. Learn to love it.

Mystery printer...

I gave my trusty A1000 a good clean, put it back in its original box (yes, I still had that) and stored it safely away for posterity. I scraped together a few pennies and bought a second hand A2000HD with an A2091 board, all in excellent condition.

Six months later I tracked down a Kickstart 2 ROM and system disks. Great! However, Scribble Platinum (remember that?) doesn't work with Workbench 2. Does anyone know of a fix? I've got WordPerfect but, like mast IBM based programs, it's unnecessarily complex. My copy of Pen Pal can't cope with 5000 word documents without growing feet of clay. Scribble was so sweet and simple to use; I miss it terribly.

More troublesome is the fate of my Citizen 200 GX printer. After a few years of quality service, it just stopped working one day. The screen told of "printer trouble - check printer and cable".

All of the printer self-tests ran flawlessly, and when I tried the printer and cable with my IBM 286 it worked. Must be the Amiga.

The Amiga repairman says it was a "dud CIA" - $95 please! Get home and my Amiga still won't drive the 200GX. I borrow my sister's A500 and Epson EX-800. Her machine wan't drive my printer either, regardless of whose cable connects it, but both my A2000 and her A500 happily drive her Epson.

I tried every Epson printer driver available - no go. Checked, double checked and triple checked the switches in the printer. The repairman at Clover Imports (they bring in Citizen printers) is perplexed, but admits to knowing nothing about the Amiga. My Amiga repairman says there is nothing wrong with the Amiga, and guesses it must be the printer. Does anybody have any clues? If not, can anyone recommend a good toupée for when I've torn the last hair from my head?

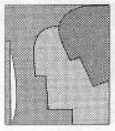
Mark Vine,
Appin NSW

Dr Help: There are some excellent commercial Amiga wordprocessors available these days - Wordworth and Final Writer spring to mind. Both are graphic and font-capable, which Scribble isn't. If all you want is the features of Scribble, which I agree is a fine, workmanlike basic text wordprocessor, there's nothing on the commercial market that'll do it. But you could try going to a PD library and getting a copy of the old ProText 4.3, which is a text-only wordpro with no graphic or font support but all the other mod cons - with very basic documentation, it'll cost you maybe $5. Bargain.

Your printer problem is, indeed, a doozy. One old nine pin Epson compatible dot matrix should be much like another; if you can't drive one, you shouldn't be able to drive any. You've obviously gone through the full gamut of testing, and have eliminated both the impossible and the improbable.

It seems to be a strange interaction between that particular computer and that particular printer, but I have no clues as to its nature (if anyone out there does, please tell me!). The problem you're experiencing, officially, Can't Happen, but many wise programmers put checks for things that Can't Happen in their software all the time...

I have to suggest something or I'll feel like a waste of space, so you could try the old Advanced Amiga Analyser, which is a hardware/software diagnostic package that comes with loopback connectors for the ports to see if anything's misbehaving, and can be set to run all week to find intermit-



tents. Call a dealer to buy it, or find a repair joint that's got it. Good luck. You'll need it.

Dodgy Drive XVII

I have a hard drive problem that I hope you will be able to help me with.

My setup is a Workbench 2 A500, A530 Turbo accelerator and a Quantum 1.08Gb Fireball SCSI-II hard drive.

I've installed the Quantum drive in the A530, in place of the old 170Mb drive (which only formatted to 162Mb).

Anyway, I'm fairly sure that I've installed it correctly - that all of the cables and leads are correctly connected. I've partitioned it with five partitions, like my other hard drive. It has 1042Mb available (1041 when formatted). From the photocopied instructions I received with it, I thought I was going to have 1092Mb. WHAT HAPPENED TO THE OTHER 50Mb?!

The partitions are 41Mb for Workbench and then four of 250Mb each. It works fine basically; I'm using it now.

The problem is - nearly every time I first turn on the A500 (cold boot) the hard drive starts to spin (sounds normal), gets to the point where it should start booting (i.e. checks for a floppy in DF0:) but instead hangs on the light grey coloured screen. The power light flashes and I get a software failure - error 80000025, task 002021C6. I have a guru decoder, which doesn't know this error number.

If I click the left mouse button from the guru box the machine boots again and works fine. I can use it for hours with no problems. But if I do a warm boot it gets to the light grey screen and hangs, and I have to turn the machine off.

Also, I have about four times now turned it on and had the machine work first go.

In an answer to a recent letter in your column you said that SCSI-1 devices work with SCSI-2 controllers and vice versa.

Do you have any idea what's wrong? Could it be the controller being incompatible, since it's SCSI-1? I believe I have all of the jumpers correct; I didn't change any, and they worked with the last hard drive. Could one of them be wrong?

I'm a little worried that I might harm the hard drive. Do you think I can - or have?

Anthony Flanagan,
Smithtown NSW

Dr Help: *Oh, yippee. Another hard drive moving in mysterious ways. I should buy a lottery ticket.*

First off, don't worry about hurting the drive. It is possible for drives to screw up in such a way as to damage themselves - I've seen a drive with a bad block map pointing to a negative location that made the head try to move past the end stop - but such events are extremely rare and your drive and computer are in no danger.

In answer to your where's-the-missing-50Mb question, congratulations! You've joined a huge group of people sucked in by the convention among hard disk manufacturers that, in order to make their drives look bigger, a Hard Drive Manufacturer's Megabyte is 1,000,000 bytes. This seems logical enough - kilo means thousand, mega means million - until you realise that computers work in powers of two and as far as they're concerned a Real Megabyte is 1,048,576 bytes - 1024 squared. And there's your 50Mb deficit. Thank you.

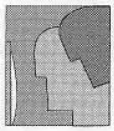
Getting back to the peculiar malfunction - perhaps there is someone in the world who can look at this problem and give you an authoritative answer right off the bat. I am not that person. On the plus side, I have solved weirder problems than this.

Check your termination. Spiffy drives like the Fireball don't have old-style resistor packs, they have weeny jumpers - little copper-in-plastic blocks that bridge pins sticking out of the circuit board. Check the drive manual to find out how the jumper's labelled.

Check your data ribbon cable. It might have been borderline on the slow 170Mb drive and not be good enough for the 1Gb. You can get another one made for you, or just buy a metre or so of 50 way ribbon and some 50 way IDC connectors from your local electronics store - there's no soldering required, just clamping, but you'll need a metre of cable and some spare connectors because you probably won't get it right the first time, and you only get one try with IDCs. Do make sure the connectors are the same way around.

Getting into weirder ideas, try changing the address of the drive - more jumper-tweaking. This should make no difference at all - SCSI addresses are either clear or they clash, full stop - but I've had correctly terminated four-device chains with no strange settings that don't work in some non-clashing address configurations and do in others. Maybe it was moon phase. Who knows.

Since you've only got one device on the SCSI bus, it should make no difference at all whether you set Last LUN and Last Disk in your GVP Fastprep (insert as many a's as you want) setup software, but feel free to do so, as the worst these settings should do is make the machine boot faster, since the controller won't be looking all down the SCSI chain for nonexistent devices. Likewise, reselection should make no difference, because you've got no other drive for the Quantum drive to be deselected in favour of, and any other



device would have to be pretty danged quick for the controller to pick it over the Quantum.

If you've got a spare $140 burning a hole in your pocket, a Guru-ROM upgrade for the A530 could be in order. I make absolutely no guarantee that this will help your problem in any way, shape or form, but it might, and the ROM upgrade WILL improve your hard disk performance when the machine's behaving itself. I reviewed the Guru-ROM in the September Amiga Review.

Comms questions

I've just decided to broaden my horizons (so to speak) and connect a modem to my computer, so now I'm in the market for some software to talk to the rest of the world - about which I have two questions.

What's the difference between NComm 3.0 and Term 3.4, and which would you recommend for my system (see below)? Are your Internet disks containing AmiTCP still available? If so, at what cost?

My system currently consists of an A2000 with 3Mb RAM, 60Mb HD, A2091 HD controller, WB2, and will soon have a high speed serial port added (Multiface III). I'm also looking at adding an accelerator (probably '030 based); is the above software compatible with an accelerator?

Lance-corporal Darren Smith, Australian Army Darwin Logistics Battalion

Dr Help: *NComm 3 is a decent shareware terminal program with all the basic features, and Term 3.4 is an old version of the most powerful Amiga terminal program - the current version is 4.5, and it's reviewed in this very magazine.*

In brief, NComm 3 (or 2, for that matter) are well suited to your current machine, but have annoying shareware reminders until you register. Term, on the other hand, is completely uncrippled, but will not be very speedy on your sluggish 68000-based machine. Which leads into your second question.

Both NComm and Term will work fine on accelerated machines, and Term practically requires at least an 020. If you want to go faster, here's what I'd do to your machine.

Don't worry about the Multiface card (the standard serial port's OK for modems up to 28,800 Bps, especially if you use a reduced-overhead serial device like Baudbandit). Ditch the A2091; it's got 16 bit fast RAM, which is fine for 68000, but an 030 wants 32 bit RAM or it'll run slow. You can mix 32 and 16 bit RAM, but when you run out of 32 bit you really know it.

Keep the old hard drive if you want; it's SCSI so you can add up to six more devices as well as the 60Mb unit. If you're getting into comms you'll want some more local storage; with 500Mb drives well under $400 you can get a lot more for not much.

To solve the RAM, accelerator and drive problem in one hit, hunt down a used GVP Combo board. You can get them with 22, 33 and 40MHz 68030s, and they can take 8Mb RAM and a hard drive right on the card.

The Amiga Review Internet Disks are still available, but if you're a comms novice I'd strongly recommend you potter around on bulletin boards before heading for the Internet, for the same reason that people who've just got their L plates are not encouraged to drive in the Paris to Dakar rally.

More power!

I continuously read in the English Amiga magazines about power supply problems when expanding the Amiga 1200. Do we in Australia have the same problems, and if we do, how far can the 1200 be pushed? Do any Australian stores sell the "gruntier" power supplies, or do we have to make do with the original? Is there any way to modify the supply or a PC supply if all else fails?

I have tried without success in Victoria to obtain the "Quickjoy Foot Pedal"; do you know anywhere in Australia I can obtain this?

Gary J McSweeney, Aspendale Vic

Dr Help: *The A1200 Power Supply Unit (or PSU, as us experts call it) is not, as you say, the Schwarzenegger of the voltmaking world.*

If you're running a 1200 with an external drive and two internal HDs you should be fine, but if you're a nut with a drive box hanging out of the PCMCIA port and one of the new and rather silly 040 cards in the trapdoor slot and four floppy drives and a fifteen kilo 1987 2Gb IDE monster hanging out the back on a ribbon cable - you get the idea.

Fortunately, the solution is simple. Your A1200 needs four power supply wires - +12V, +5V, -12V and ground. It's stamped on the bottom of the supply, as is the pinout on some models.

Now, either find someone handy with a soldering iron and multimeter or drink whiskey until you think you are, and graft a 200W IBM-compatible PSU, yours for well under $100, onto the A1200 brick's cable. It's not as pretty as the boxed-up European versions, but who cares. I've had a 500 running this way for years.

As for the foot pedals, I've no idea where you could get them. If anyone out there does know, tell me and I'll tell Gary!

❑

Send your questions to Dr. Help P.O. Box 278 Camperdown 2050

Australian AMIGA Review

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• Wordprocessing - Text Plus, AmigaFOX, Liner, SuperRetLab, GWPRint & Print Studio
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Communications
• 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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• 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.
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• MS-DOS Emulator - PC-TASK (shareware-no write to disk) & Transformer. Run most MS-DOS business software.
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FOR SALE: Laser Printer NEC Silent Writer $500.00 ono, CD-ROM external NEC still under warranty wih cable, docs and software, $150.00 ono, 386 Bridgeboard to suit Amiga 2000 $500.00 or near offer. Phone Steve (02) 708 4403

FOR SALE: Lots of games and utilities, too many to list. Ph (074) 490 821

FOR SALE: Macintosh ROM sets to suit AMAX etc. $70/set. Call Leslie. Ph (0411) 247 170

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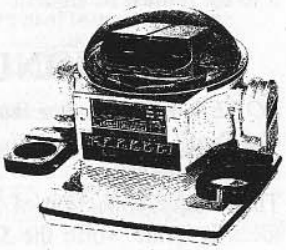

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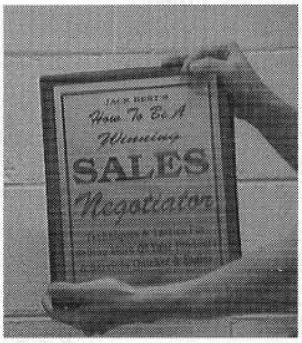

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Amiga

CD-ROM Update

By Daniel Rutter

The Amiga CD-ROM software keeps rolling in. In this article I take a look at the LSD Compendium Deluxe Volume 3, the most recent Aminet disc, The Global Amiga Experience, and 17 Bit - The Fifth Dimension.

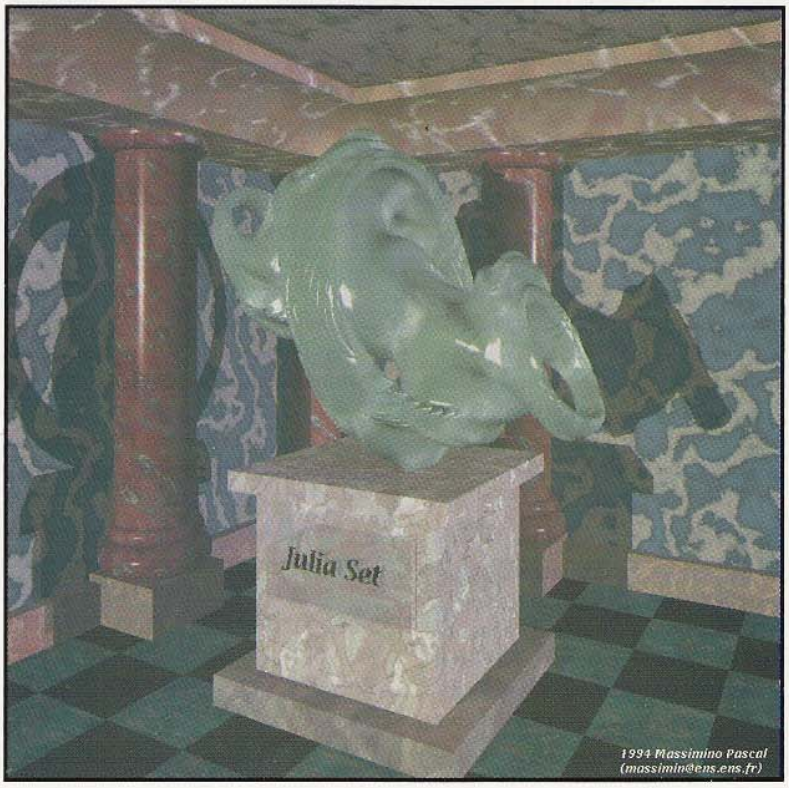
LSD Compendium 3

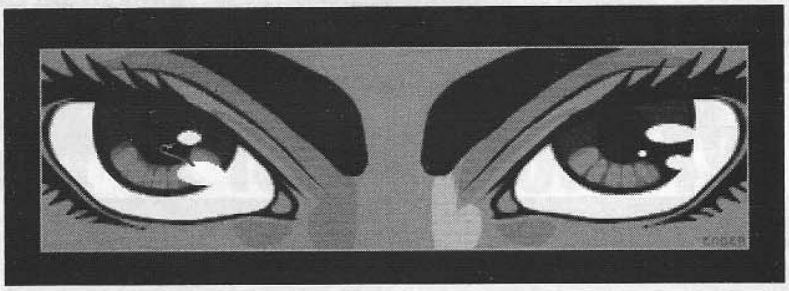
The LSD discs are a smorgasbord series - various cool stuff glommed from various sources.

This latest disc makes an attempt at an Aminet-style Amigaguide interface, and ends up with a serviceable enough but not nearly as nifty system. It lets you get at a load of nominally ready-to-run software - nominally because there are a lot of demos on this disc, and these are notoriously machine sensitive.

Along with the ECS and AGA demos, there's a ton of ECS and AGA pictures (divided into hand drawn, rendered, scanned and Workbench backdrop-ready) and rather a lot of animations. These vary from very new to very old, but they're mostly good.

On top of this there's a load of music MODs (the ones I auditioned were good), some decent clip art, interesting source code for the programmers out there, and a





fair collection of games including a section dedicated to the ever-popular Boulderdash clones.

There's a smattering of utilities, comms software, disk magazines, a decent collection of text (including a nice collection of the excellent Remote Access Humour) and, of course, more. For $49, this is a fun collection that won't intersect much with any existing discs you've got. Check it out.

Aminet 8

Aminet 8 is the latest in an illustrious line of cheap, high quality CDs which, as I've said more than once before, every CD-ROM equipped Amiga user should have. There's not a lot I can say about Aminet 8 that I haven't said already about previous editions; here's the Standard Aminet Description, for people who've missed my past reviews.

Aminet is a huge Internet archive of Amiga software. The Aminet CD-ROMs are periodic compilations of the new stuff from Aminet, and traditionally each also have a focus area which contains all Aminet's software in a particular genre or even gets extra stuff together to fill it out.

The Aminet discs are also equipped with a particularly nice Amigaguide interface that makes it easy to search for files, see their descriptions, make lists of things you like and extract files to wherever you want - or run/view/play them straight from the CD in many cases.

As always, Aminet 8 is largely new - less than 35Mb of its 639Mb contents have appeared on previous Aminet discs. The focus area for Aminet 8 is music modules - uncompressed, it's got 450Mb of 'em.

They're indexed by type, by program and by author, and you can of course play them with a single click on a list. Naturally, not all of the music is fabulous, but hey - there's more than 2000 to choose from.

There have also been the traditional couple of tweaks to the interface. The most notable improvement is that this one Aminet CD lets you search all the others; the "Find" command now has an index for all of the Aminet discs; if the file you want is on, say, Aminet 6 and you've got that CD, you just swap the disc and extract the file, without fumbling around with a second Find command. It'd be nice if you could restrict the search to the CDs you actually own, but that's niggling.

The next cabs off the rank in Schatztruhe's Aminet series will be the inventively titled Aminet 9 and the second Aminet Set release - the whole Aminet archive in one lump again. Look for a review in these pages!

The Global Amiga Experience

Very few of the programs on this CD-ROM works properly. But that's the idea.

This disc is full of program demos - crippled preview versions of commercial or shareware products - for you to check out prior to getting the real things.

What's good about it? Well, for a start, it's not all demos - you get some "real" software too. The catch is that it's all old versions - Imagine 2.0, Scala 1.13, VistaPro1.0, Distant Suns 4.0 and The Edge 1.721.

All can be upgraded to the current versions, though it may be fiddly from Australia.

The rest of the software is standard demo fare - generally, save and print options are disabled. There are a few oddities, like an uncompleted game and a couple of demos that are just pictures (like the ADPro 2.5 one...) or animations (Dr T's KCS 3.5), and there's a fair bit of old software in there, but you also get the demo version of just about every current Amiga application. It's pretty safe to say that if it's got a demo, it's on this disc.

More obscure software resides in the Compressed directory, which contains archives of all of the programs in the ready-to-run sections, plus plenty more.

The down side? Well, unfortunately, this CD is from Germany. Now, the German Amiga community is perhaps the most vibrant in the world, but they do have one shortcoming - they rather like to speak German. This means that about half of the programs on this disc are in German, and hence practically impossible to use for anyone who doesn't speak (or at least read) the language. There's an English version of the CD's own explanatory text, but it's not very well translated; you've got to bear in mind that "therefore" may mean "otherwise".

Also, if a particular piece of software takes your fancy and it's not one of the Big Applications, it probably won't be on the shelves locally and you're going to have to find a dealer who'll bring it in for you, or do it yourself.

This disc is not a complete waste of time. But $69 is a bit much for the convenience of having a whole load of crippled software in one place. Aminet charges half as much for a much better indexed disc of mainly completely functional software.

17 Bit - The Fifth Dimension

Compiled by the same people that do the LSD discs, this is the fifth in their series of lots-of-floppies-on-a-CD discs. You get a quite good Amigaguide interface (better than LSD's, worse than Aminet's) to the contents of 646 individual floppy disks, all of which have to be extracted before use.

You can either extract to a real floppy or use an appropriately sized RAD (recoverable RAM disk) or FMSDisk fake floppy for speed, although FMSDisk and other filesystems that make a fake floppy in a 900K-odd hard disk file aren't bootable and are hence no use for bootable games, demos and the like.

The software you get once you've extracted the floppy may well be hard disk installable anyway.

Again, this is a smorgasbord; demos, games, utilities, graphics, music and more. It's just a chronological slice of the 17 Bit PD library, after all; there's something for everyone here.

This disc's main failing is the clunkiness of the floppy archive idea; if the floppies were stored as LhA archives, for instance, you could extract them straight to anywhere - but the various non-DOS demos and games wouldn't be storable.

But they could have made the DOS disks more sensible archives; if you've got a CD-ROM drive, you've probably also got a hard drive, which you probably got to avoid all that irritating floppy bashing.

If Aminet had more non-DOS stuff, it'd trample this disc; as it stands, demo-hounds will be better served by the 17 Bit disc, but Aminet's $14 cheaper.

❑

For more information about Aminet discs, contact Amadeus Computers on (02) 651 1711; available for $35 from your Amiga dealer.

The Global Amiga Experience $69; LSD 3 and 17 Bit 5 $49 each from Amadeus.

Personal Suite

An instant software collection for $99

By Andrew Farrell

Filling a CD-ROM with all the useful software in the world is a marvellous idea.

The trouble is, no single publisher is likely to have the best of everything.

As a result, all such CD compilations contain good, bad and plain ugly programs. This disc is no exception. However, it is unquestionably excellent value for money.

On the one CD you get Personal Paint 6.4, Superbase Personal 4 (1.30n), Personal Write 4.1, Personal Fonts Maker 1.2 and 2.0, various utilities, a whole stack of animations including the entire collections of Jim Sachs and Eric Schwartz, 27 Kara fonts and one animated font, animated stereograms, other fonts and a stack of AmigaGuide format books.

There are things on this disk worth the price alone - let alone when bundled with a truck load of other stuff.

The Schwartz animations come to mind - this is a timeless collection of entertaining cartoons supplied in both original MovieSetter format and also as .anim files.

Personal Paint 6.4
(Originally reviewed Feb 95 V6.1)

Fast approaching the power of Deluxe Paint for animation, but already surpassing it for image processing and true Amiga compatibility, Personal Paint has sold for as much this CD by itself. This is without doubt the flagship product in the suite.

Version 6.4 supports animation (featuring a storyboard, good compression, multiple palettes, frame-by-frame timing, ANIM-5/7/8 and hybrid formats)

Sophisticated behind the scenes memory management, including virtual memory (swaps inactive image data to Fast RAM and disk storage) and multiple levels of undo and redo makes this program suitable for typical memory levels.

New, faster image processing effects, including transparencies, alpha channel and single image stereograms (both SIRDS and custom pattern stereograms, as in "Magic Eye") and support of Retargetable Graphics (display cards like the Picasso, Retina, Piccolo, Rainbow, EGS, Talon,

Cybergraphics etc.) are the sort of thing that leave Deluxe Paint for dead.

You can produce animation on RTG display cards (with or without double-buffering). You can print high quality 24 bit images in colour and monochrome and interface to third-party software such as Studio Print Server.

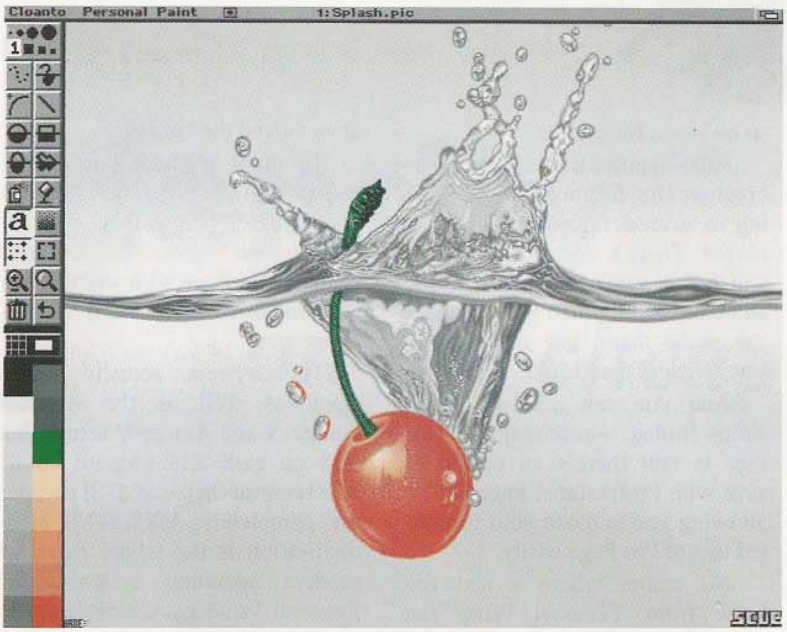
There are professional and fast modes for converting 24 bit pictures (IFF, PNG, PCX, PBM etc.) to 256 colours or less with a HAM, HAM8, Picasso and Cybergraphics 24-bit viewer active during colour reduction.

This is the first paint program worldwide to support the new PNG (Portable Network Graphics) file format. External input/output modules (loaders and savers) make it easy for extensions and upgrades. Modules for IFF, PNG, PCX, PBM, Amiga DataTypes and several others are included. A GIF module is available from public domain sources.

There's also support and editing of IFF, PNG and GIF project annotations (Author, Copyright and Comment fields, plus Amiga filenotes), Autoscroll painting, Workbench Application Icon (Drag and Drop) and of course standard ASL-compatible file requestors.

In the latest release some features have been speeded up thanks to more machine language code. The interface is improved, and there's a collection of utilities, including colour fonts, new DeskJet printer drivers (up to four inks) and a JPEG DataType.

Personal Paint lacks Deluxe Paint's move animation function, and is a poor performer in the brush anim department. Otherwise, this program is top notch and at this price is an absolute bargain. If you're into image processing, but don't want a full blown program and a separate paint package, try Personal Paint.



Personal Write 4.1
(Originally reviewed May 1994)

Idiosyncratic operation combined with a few important missing features may turn you off Personal Write. However it offers an extraordinary list of features for the price.

You can get away with a stripped down word processor if you've no need for frills, or if all the formatting niceties are going to be added later in a DTP package and you just need a simple, fast way of getting the words into the computer.

Personal Write does not support the pretty fonts and pictures approach of the modern wordprocessor. It is a text only affair with strange formatting codes to boot. It uses proper Amiga windows for viewing documents, and automatically reflows the text to match the size of the window you use. It can do a mail merge - substituting names, addresses, honourific and

so on into a form letter.

Auto-hyphenation, keyed encryption (for paranoids), and saving in several file formats is supported. There's compressed saves, which are great for floppy users, and a bit smaller than PowerPacker can make them, but still slightly less efficient than LhA.

And you can save in ANSI X#.64 format, whose major advantage is that there's an option to save with Professional Page codes, allowing you to move your formatted text to Pro Page easily.

No matter where a text file came from, Personal Write can probably load it, edit it and save it in a format the original machine can read. Personal Write can actually load pictures, and print them, but it can't mix text with pictures in any way at all.

A basic Postscript driver built in, so you can select which of the printer's built in fonts to use for each typestyle and other basic features. Printer support doesn't include oddities like expanded and shadowed text, which most dot matrixes can do. You can't even insert escape codes into the text to activate these modes the quick and dirty way.

The biggest omission is a spell checker. Personal Write's got an emergency text retriever, GrabText, which you use if your computer hung before you'd saved - or worse, while you saved. It scans memory after you reboot and tries to find the files Personal Write was working on.

Nonstandard dialogue boxes pop up often, which look and work worse than the standard ones. Mystifying. But Personal Write goes further, with a block marking system that goes against not only Amiga standard, but the standard of the entire computer industry back to the bad old days of the early '80s when everyone's program had different ideas about which keys moved the cursor!

To mark a block you hit F8 twice, then drag out the block as normal. You can't then see the "highlighted" area, but cut and paste (again done with weird F-key combinations) work on it as normal.

This system actually works about as well as the standard Amiga-X and Amiga-V setups, but why on earth did Cloanto do it? Just because they could? It escapes me completely; GREATER standardisation is the whole thrust of modern operating systems, and Personal Write goes completely in the other direction.

If a "full" word processor is a tablecloth, Personal Write's a doily - smaller, but remarkably frilly. There are scads of little dangly bits to play with in this program, from sound feedback for events and errors to about a billion weeny configuration options.

If you can put up with Personal Write's quirks, you won't find more bang per buck anywhere.

Superbase Personal 4(1.30n) (Not reviewed in last two years)

Since this is the only program in the package of any substance that we have not given considerable review in recent times, I thought it worth covering in more detail than the other offerings.

Superbase is a solid relational database that has managed to stick to most of the Amiga style guidelines, resulting in an easy to use program that's intuitive enough to navigate for most of the way without a printed manual.

It can be driven either using a mouse or from the keyboard. The program handles the usual database management tasks of sorting, exchanging data with other applications and merging data files with text files with relative ease. It also handles user defined forms using a separate editor, and can include sounds and bitmap images.

To run it you'll need Workbench 1.3 or better. However, if you have an AGA machine, there's support for up to 256 colours in various screen modes.

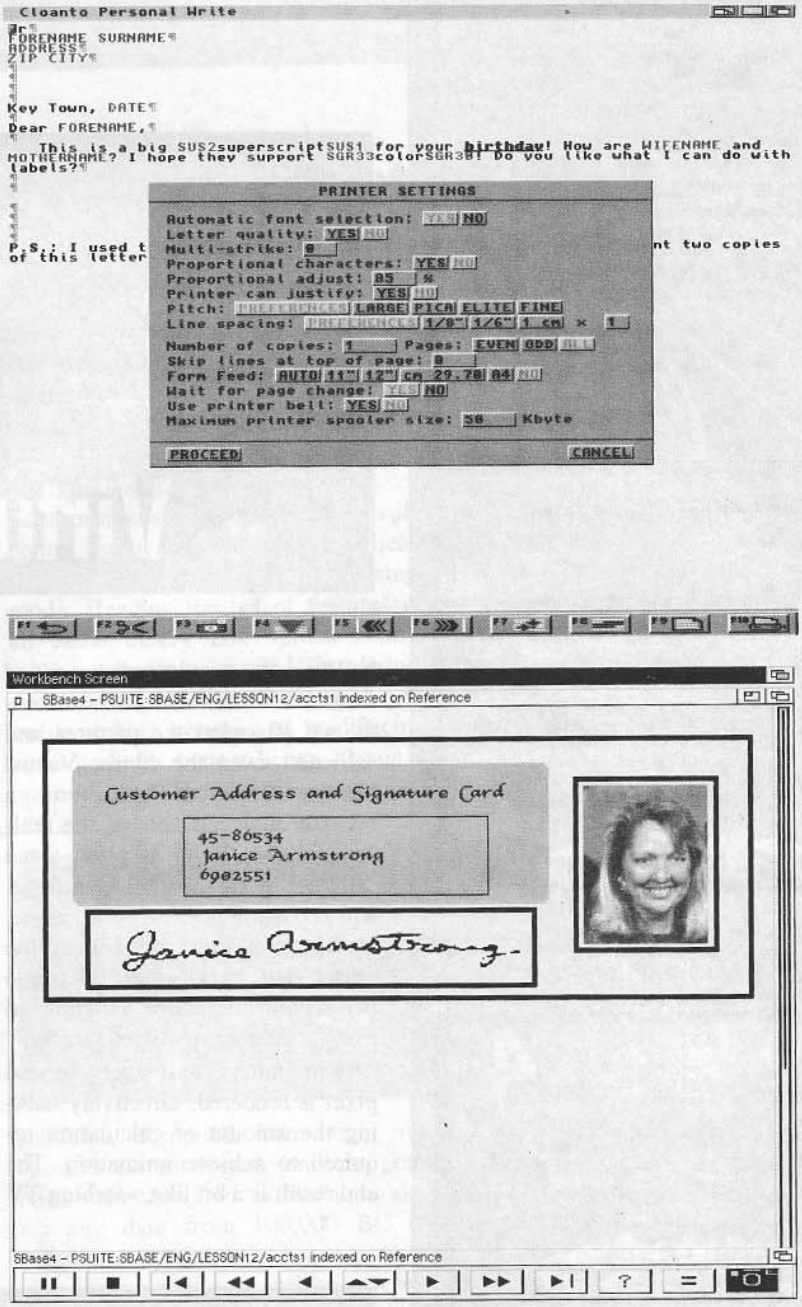
Browsing and searching is made possible using a floating VCR style control bar. The database handles relational links, so you can create powerful multfile lookups and queries all using requestor based controls.

With a little help from the forms editor, it's possible to make very user friendly applications. Even without the DML scripting language of the Pro version, multiple commands can be launched from buttons, and predefined reports and queries called on. The editor for forms is not the best - but once you get a grip on the ugly tool bar and awkward snap to grid functions, it's reasonably easy going.

The query function is very powerful and may look a tad complex at first. You can choose which fields to display, place them in any order, choose page or table orientation, and switch to your preferred index sequence. You can also set up filters - although these can be slow on large files.

It's possible to exchange data with other programs via a range of import and export formats, multifile queries and global updates, and to produce formatted reports. A communications function gives you access to remote systems by modem.

What started out as a report generator, has turned into a fully fledged form designer for creating complete screen forms that can look like the original paper document. However, you can also design reports for printing to screen or hard copy. You may include fields from many files on a form,



which may in turn have multiple pages. The Form Designer Pro in SBase Professional 4 adds the ability to define a block of fields as transaction lines, so that one-to-many file relationships can be managed without programming. Field data may be displayed and printed in different fonts. Calculation formulas may be incorporated to give the form powerful processing capabilities.

Superbase is the best database available on the Amiga. It's worth $99 by itself - it still beats any other more recent offerings by a mile. If you need to do something more complex, move up to the Pro version. I have seen very complex applications created using Superbase. It is still a very capable program and adds much value to the Personal Suite.

Wrap Up

Personal Suite is a classic can't go wrong purchase. There's enough stuff on there that at least a few of the offerings will make the price worthwhile. It would be great to see a compilation at a higher price that offered a true office suite - the way things are moving that may well happen. If you're running a low memory system, have a strong interest in graphics and animation and only occasional need for light weight wordprocessing, this disc is for you. Buy it.

For more information contact Amadeus on (02) 651 1711. RRP $99.

Jargon Buster

Relational Database: Linking two or more databases together through one or more common fields - for example, a database of clients, a database of inventory.

As a client makes a purchase, you keep a separate database of each transaction. A single field in the transaction record points to a record in the client database, and another field points to a record (is related to) in the inventory database.

The point is, instead of duplicating the information in each transaction record, the pointers create a link, so that when you view each transaction, the correct record from the related databases can also immediately be displayed.

Database: A collection of records of a particular logical set of information - for example a database of contacts would be like an electronic card file index.

Record: A single entry relating to one member of the group of things that make the entire database - for example all the information on one person in a database of people.

Field: A single piece of information in a record. In a database of people, a single record on one person might contain a field holding that person's age. A field is normally defined to hold a certain type of information - for example a number, date, amount or word.

Virtual Karting

When the preview disk arrived from OTM Publications last month, we all ogled the pictures and salivated over the blurb. Virtual Karting sounded like quite a breakthrough. Of course, the reality of these things is often a tad different from the pre-sales hype. Virtual Karting is a good game. However, it must be said at the outset that its glorious 50 frame per second animation is achieved using a number of obvious tricks.

For starters, only every second pixel is rendered, effectively halving the amount of calculation required to achieve animation. The end result is a bit like watching TV through a flyscreen - but, once you get used to it, it's reasonably acceptable. The frame rate is excellent, providing very realistic looking animation - for a 2/3 screen game. Yes, it's not the whole screen. Does this matter? Not a lot.

I enjoyed Virtual Karting. In case you missed last month's preview, here's the scoop. You have two types of kart and three tracks to choose from. The game offers several viewpoints, like many arcade game offerings (Daytona, for example). The terrain is definitely two dimensional - dead flat - but the track has plenty of twists and turns. The other karts look very

Close up, you can see that half of the screen is black.

complete, and you can leave neat skid marks all over the place.

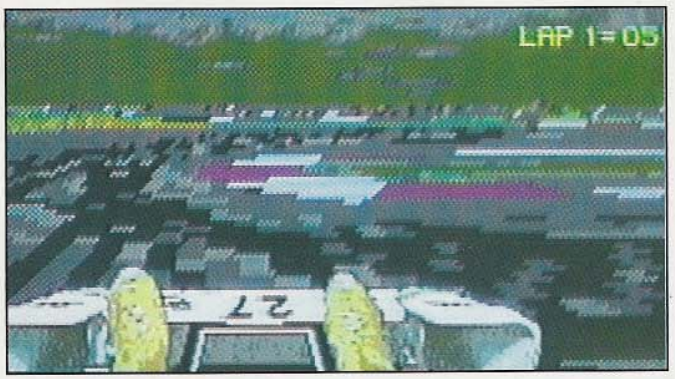
Driving the kart with a regular joystick is a bit tricky. If you can find an analog stick or, even better, a steering wheel, and an Amiga adaptor, you'll probably get a better driving feel. I tried the mouse, but found that without a sensitivity setting, I just needed too much desk space to make steering comfortable.

I raced, slid, skidded and bounced around the tracks. It's a fun, fast race game - but it seemed to lack a bit in the variation department. I was also a bit disappointed by the sound, which is very synthesised and lacks any interesting stereo panning effects.

The three tracks are reasonably challenging, but like any real go-kart track they consist of lots of short straights and tight curves. Running off the track slows you down to a crawl, but that's it. You can drive anywhere if you want to.

A two player mode, a few hills instead of the flat track and better sound would really make this game. As it stands, Virtual Karting is proof that there's life in the A1200 yet when it comes to games - so stay tuned for future games from the guy who wrote this one - he's promising a lot more.

Local distribution is to be announced - check with your local dealer.



Virtual Karting

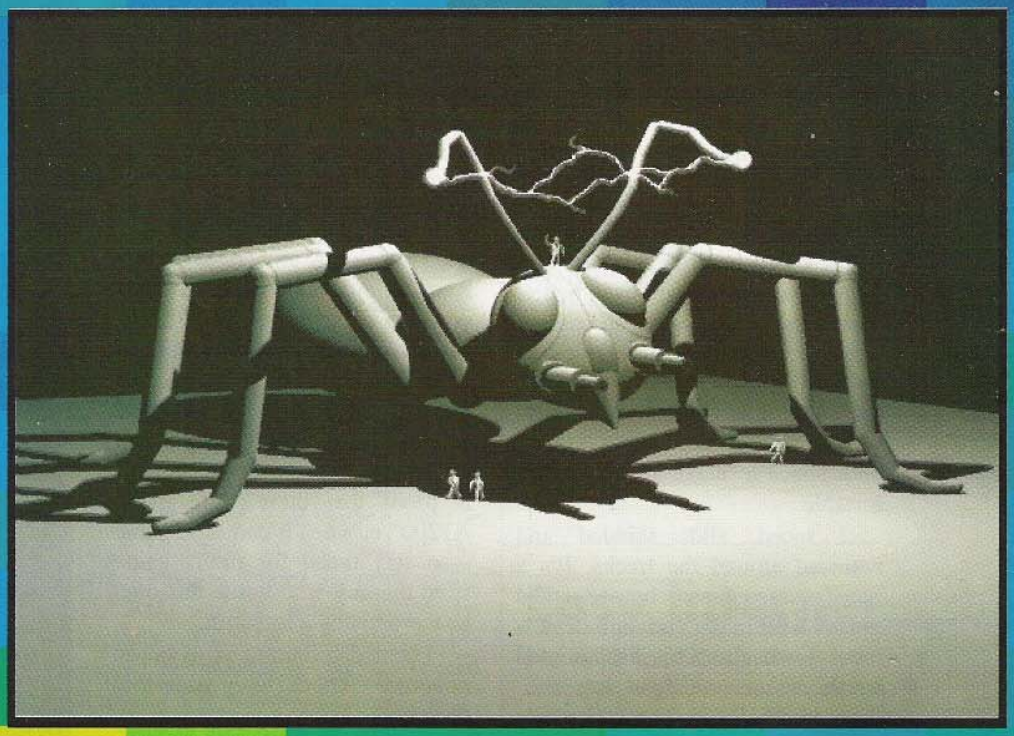
A1200 or better
FAST RAM recommended
Hard disk installable

AMIGA Art Gallery

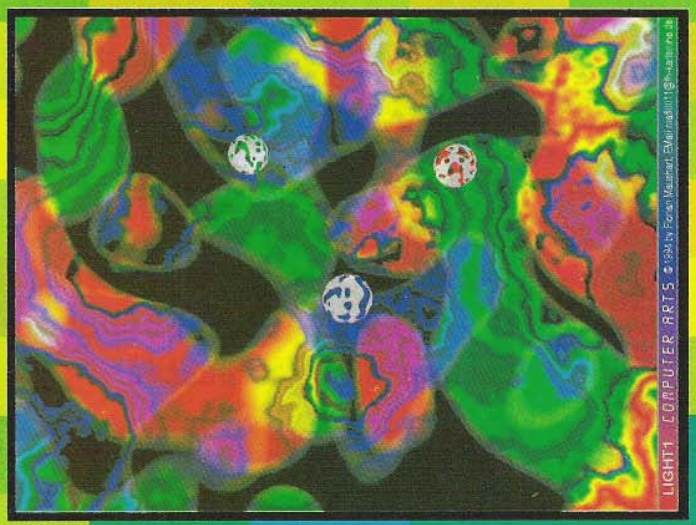
By Norman Cantrell

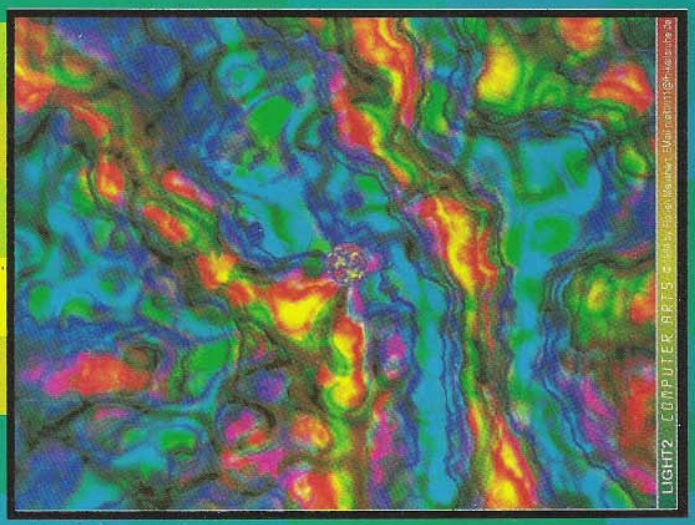
Contributions to the Amiga Review Art Gallery are welcome. Please post your contributions to Amiga Review,
PO Box 278, Camperdown NSW 2050
or you can modem them directly to us on (02) 550 2499. We also accept files by Internet or CompuServe.
Our Internet address is pcreview@world.net.
CompuServe is 74431, 1224.

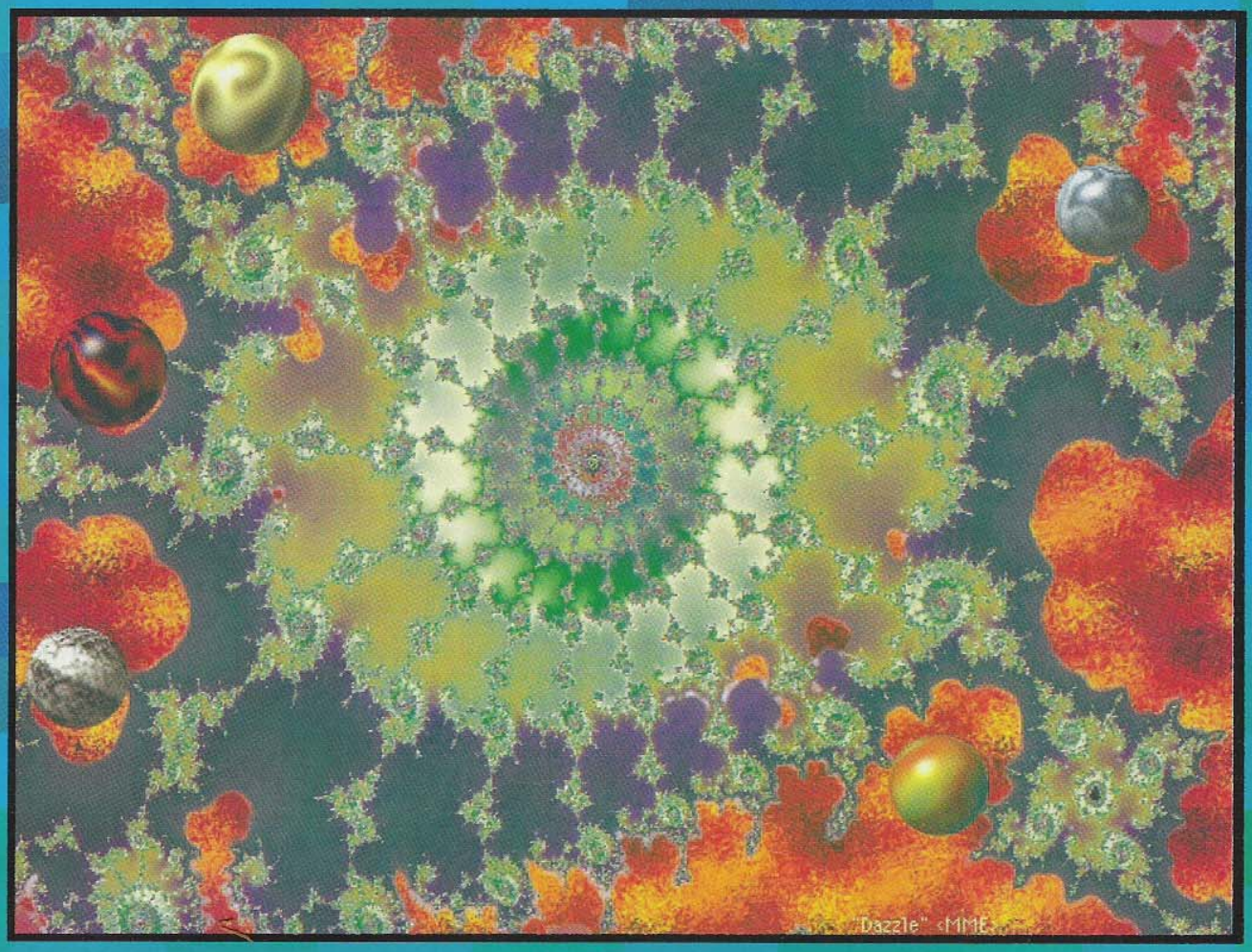
RIGHT: MechAnt
by Steven W. Winkler
640 x 400, Real 3D



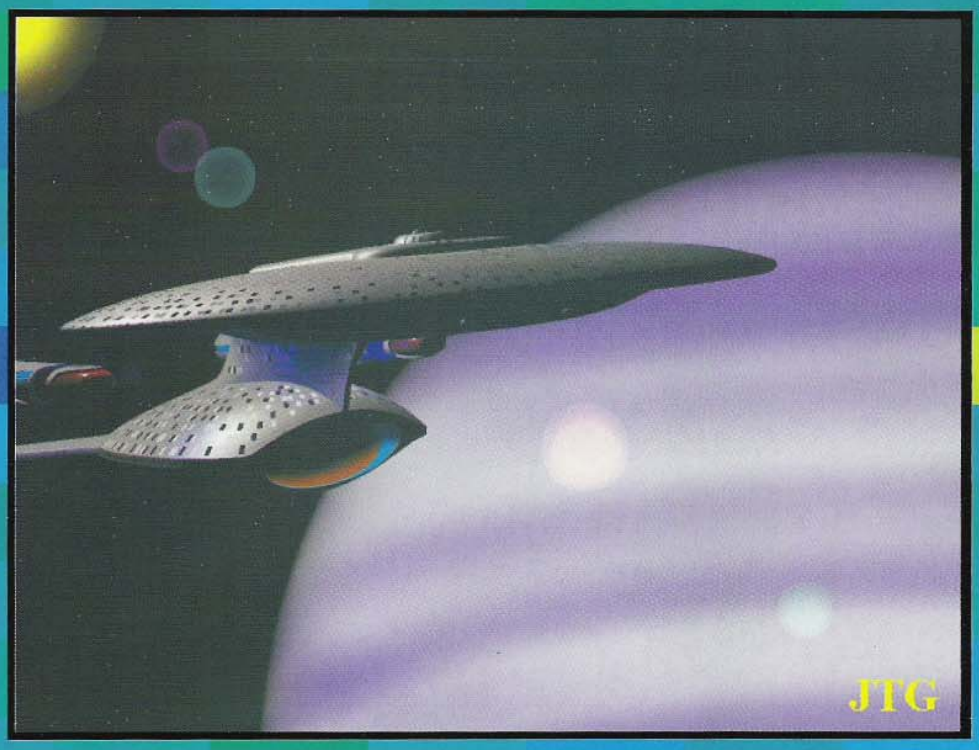
BELOW: Light1, Light2,
Light3, Light4,
by Florian Maushart
1024 x 768, 24Bit







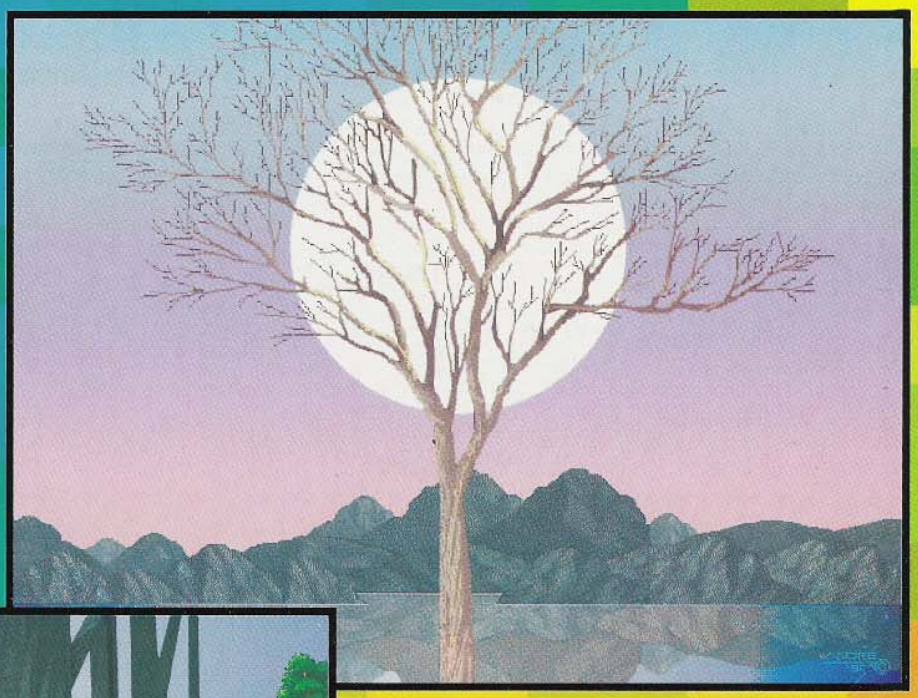
ABOVE: Dazzle
640 x 480, 24Bit

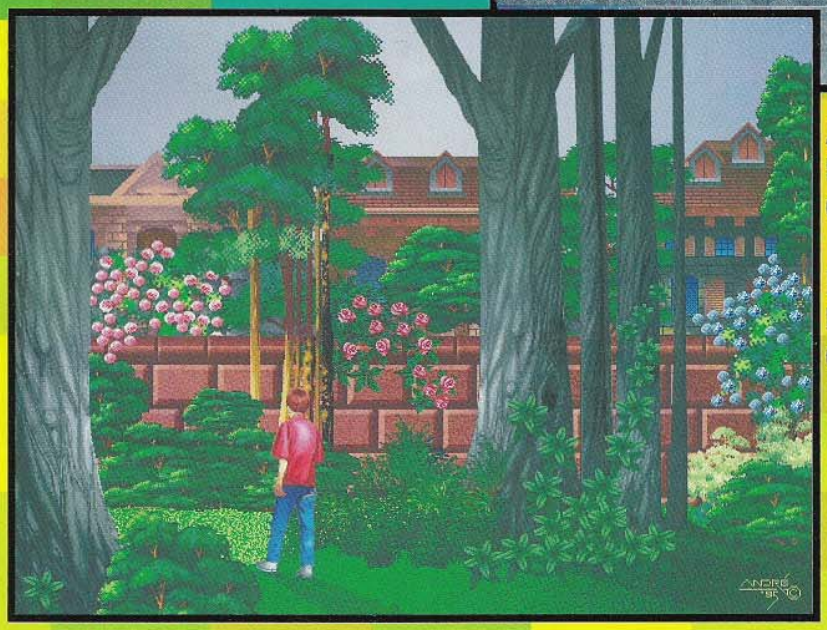


**LEFT: Fogtrek
640 x 480, 24Bit.
Rendered in Imagine 3.1
and 3.2.**

**RIGHT:
800 x 600,
24Bit**

LEFT: MicroBike
by Paulo Kiefe
800 x 600, 24Bit

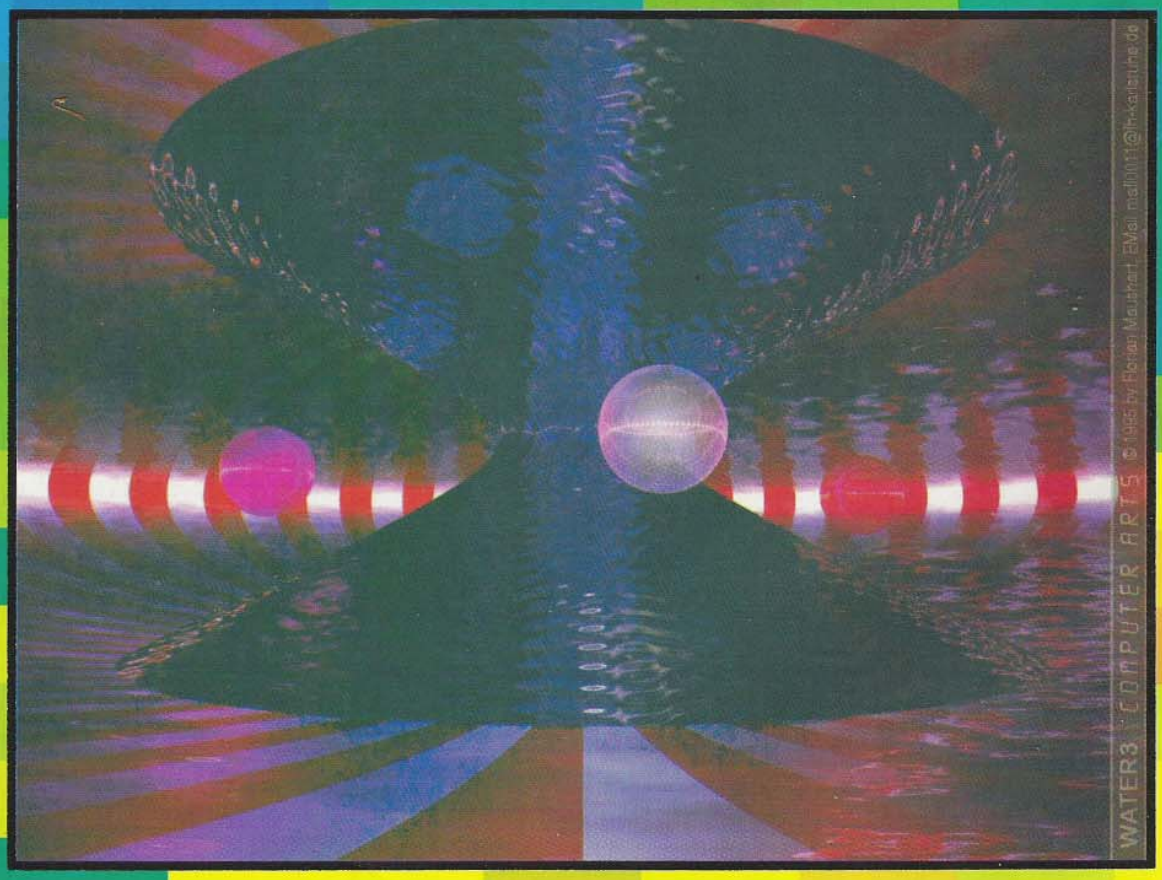




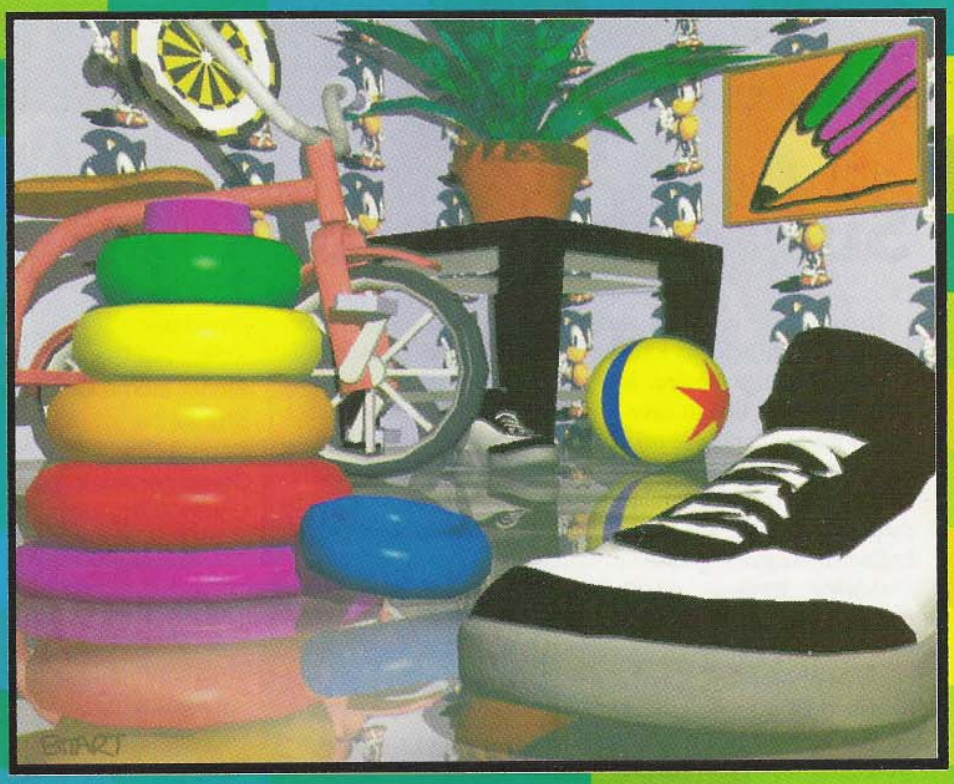
ABOVE: GhostGum
by Andre Alexander
640 x 480

LEFT: Street
by Andre Alexander
640 x 480

LEFT and BELOW: Water by Florian Maushart. 1024 x 768, 24Bit.



RIGHT: 704 x 566. 24Bit image created using Reflections 2.0 and Opal Paint on an Amiga 3000/25.



BELOW: Rose 1024 x 768, 24Bit

CORRECTION

AGASIG Telephone #'s

Last month we carried an article in the Amiga Graphic Artists Special Interest Group. Unfortunately, we managed to get a few steps ahead of Telstra adding a '9' suffix to phone numbers in Sydney. Delete the nine and you have the right number - the nine will belong there eventually, but not yet. So the correct numbers are (02) 545 4572 for Michael Williamson and (02) 545 1995 for Ivan Smith.

Subscriber Info

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Amiga Review usually comes off the press on a Friday. We get our subscriber copies on Monday. They're delivered to a mailing house for processing and are lodged with Australia Post Tuesday morning. Newsagent copies are trucked directly to newsagents and will go on sale on Wednesday. Now comes the real battle. Australia Post takes anything from one day to over a week to delivery interstate copies. One subscriber told us recently that a friend one suburb away got his mag a week later.

If you have a questions about your subscription, call Delilah on 1-800 252 879. If you would like to subscribe, you can pay by credit card, cheque or money order, or we can bill you. Credit card payments will appear as Storm Front Studios. ❑

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If you can write in plain English, have experience with a particular product and can meet deadlines, we'd like to hear from you.

Amiga Review is looking for articles providing practical help using commonly run applications.

Any wordprocessor format is acceptable, although straight ASCII is preferred. IFF images should include captions in a separate text file (or on the end of the main text file).

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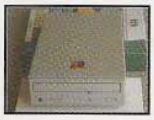

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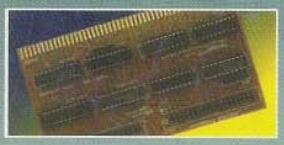

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