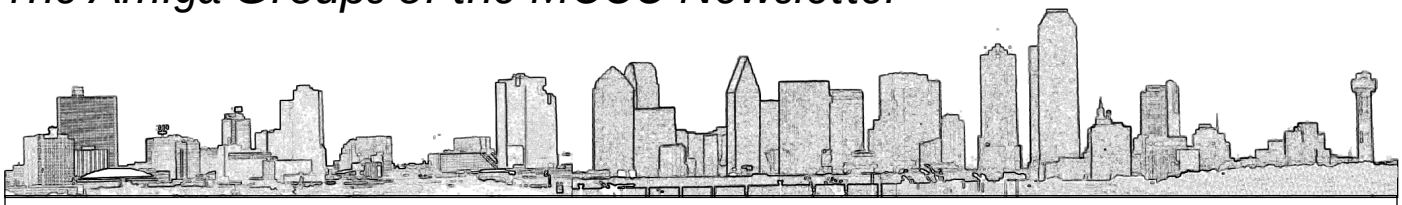
The AGM Journal

The Amiga Groups of the MCCC Newsletter



Fort Worth *Volume 16 Issue 2 — April 1998* *Dallas*

Gateway '98

The First Amiga Show of the Year

by Johnny C. Kitchens

Several months back, Mark Stodola and I came up with a great idea. Why not try to go to one of these Amiga shows. The first show to be announced... Gateway '98. This show received a nice review in '97 and it was a reasonable distance compared to most of them. Mark was able to get good pricing on the tickets for the flight. For me, the flight was as exciting as the show, since I had never been up in a plane. I could hardly wait! We bought all the tickets in advance, reserved our room, and generally planned everything. It took forever for the day to arrive. It only struck me a few days before that we were leaving on Friday the 13th. Everything went very smoothly.

We flew from DFW to Atlanta, and from there to St. Louis. We arrived at the Harley Hotel, a renamed Hemsley, at 12:40pm. On the side of the hotel was sign of huge proportions proclaiming the Amiga show being held there. What a sight... and it could be seen from a distance.

The main part of the show would only be available on Saturday and Sunday. For Friday, 14 classes were scheduled, covering most of the day. Some classes cost, some were free. The free ones interested me the most. I had chosen a class on the new Boxer motherboard. This is the new motherboard generating much excitement in the Amiga community, with all the new enhancements it will bring to the Amiga. The class fell through when the speaker failed to show.

We, instead, got a class from Motorola and Skipper Smith. Skipper Smith oddly enough has been known to me for quite awhile, in name. I have communicated with him quite a few times over the years, through telecommunications. How nice it was to see him in person. The class was packed and there was standing room only. (This theme was repeated for quite a few of the shows I attended.) Skipper Smith really knows his stuff and presented a very interesting class. He pointed out that Motorola was still aggressively developing the PowerPC, and why we have nothing to worry about. His biggest revelation was that Motorola is outselling Intel in the CPU market. Want to find out why? If you come to our meeting we are going to show this class, as Mark did tape it, as well as good deal of the rest of the show... or at least as much as we could get on two tapes.

The other problem with the classes, and I think many agreed, was that they were too short. They were all set to 45 minutes. A few worked in that amount of time, but the rest seemed to be just getting started when they would end.

The rest of Friday was rather quiet for me as I was beginning to feel the effects of just four hours of sleep, plus the excitement. I saw Petro Tyschtschenko for the first time, and Mark went to a class on licensing presented by him. I began the first of many up and down chases after a CyberstormPPC. I found Greg Scott of National Amiga, a mail-order Amiga dealer, if he had a 233MHz CyberstormPPC. He said yes, and I thought my worries of waiting were over. I went to his room where it was a beehive of activity with wall to wall Amiga products being sorted out in preparation for Saturday. He finally found the card only to discover it had no 060 on board. I chased after that card the whole weekend, only to find it was 200MHz.

There was big party Friday night for the developers, which I got to see part of. Loud music featuring the Blues Brothers really shook the place, and more than a few were feeling the effects of the party the next day. Saturday started early, first class started at 9:15. We attended one on C programming, and I was very happy to see some real talent still working with the Amiga. This was the smallest attended class I attended — no doubt the early time had an affect on that.

The next class featured the User Group Network, which appears to be trying to bring all user groups closer together by providing a common ground for exchange between the user groups. Such things as brochures, information, a library for newsletter articles, and chat rooms on the Internet. Attending the meeting was Jeff Schindler,

the man in charge of the Amiga from Gateway. He took notes and asked questions, and showed a real interest. This meeting was way too short, in part due to technical difficulties with a computer that apparently was to be used, but wasn't.

Using a Mandelbrot program that allows switching between the 060 and the PowerPC, I could measure the difference in speed between the 50MHz 68060 and the 200MHz 604e. What took 40 seconds on the 060, took but 3 seconds on the 604e.

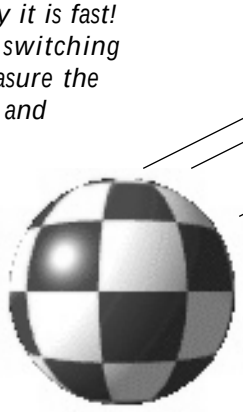
At 11:00am the main room was opened and the buying started. It was very hard to get around in some places. The hardest to get into was National Amiga. I have never seen so many people packed into such a small spot. It was nonstop buying frenzy for them for most of Saturday! At their booth I saw the new Amiga PowerTower... serial number 1, by the way. It has a new look from the 4000T and it features the CyberstormPPC and Picasso IV as standard. I ran some quick tests on it and can say it is fast! Using a Mandelbrot program that allows switching between the 060 and the PowerPC, I could measure the difference in speed between the 50MHz 68060 and the 200MHz 604e. What took 40 seconds on the 060, took but 3 seconds on the 604e.

I saw people I had only seen pictures of or read about all over this room, there was even someone from back home present... Eldor from Commodore Country was there wheeling and dealing. Holger Kruse was there selling Miami and explaining it. It is a wonder he still has voice. I saw the Siamese system for the first time in action. He actually had an Amiga in a duffel bag, connected to PC. He announced that he was taking advanced orders for an Amiga on a PCI card. It features all the custom chips on the card. He has built two of them and they work, but he did not show them. He needs 500 orders to begin production of the cards. That afternoon I attended a class from Asimware on their new product MasterISO 2.0. With this product the Amiga can burn CDs with the best of them. There seemed to nothing it cannot do with either CD-R or CD-RW. He convinced me and I bought a copy.

Two decorations stood out at the show... boing ball and yellow ballons with smiley faces wearing sunglasses. Someone had painted an eight ball to look like boing ball. There were little boing balls everywhere. They had presented Joe Torres with shoes painted as boing balls and they had speakers on them so that they made the boing sound as he walked. The yellow ballons had the saying "Future so bright you gotta wear...", in reference to the shades of course.

The next big thing was the door prizes, featuring a 4000T. It took nearly an hour to go through all the stuff they wanted to give away before getting to the 4000T. Originally it was going to be just the computer, but at the last minute a monitor was included. I have to say that was one happy guy! The final event for Saturday was the $30 banquet. It had sold out weeks in advance, so I was happy that we had ordered early. There was lots of food, and we got a speech from Petro Tyschtschenko, a very long speech from Mitch Stone, who apparently is anti-Microsoft, and Jeff Schindler. There was some disappointment for me here. I was hoping for some big announcement, and there were none. Mr. Schindler made it sound as if there would be a question and answer session after his speech and that did not happen. All in all, a rather quiet ending for a rather exciting day.

Sunday I spent most of my time in the show looking around for the bargains that might pop up as the day drew to a close. Mark attended a class on Opus and attended a User Group luncheon. Maybe he will have time to tell us about it at a meeting, hint hint. The big thing for Sunday was the door prizes where they were giving away a Toaster 4000 card and a 1200. It took well over an hour to get through all of the door prizes before the big two. It took four tries for them to get a winner for the 1200. After one name was called, everyone thought there was a winner and began leaving, only to have everyone get called back to draw again. Then it was all over. As we left the hotel we noticed a Holiday Inn had a large boing ball on top... or at least it seemed to be.



The trip back went half-way as planned. We saw several people from the show at the St. Louis airport, including the 4000T winner. We made it to Atlanta on schedule, but then our problems began. I saw more of Atlanta's airport than our own DFW, not to mention spending 8 hours in the thing. Getting home sure was nice, but I am ready to try it again. AGM

Pre\Box — Taking The Next Step

PowerPC Multiprocessing and AmigaOS 3.1
An Important Announcement From Phase 5 Digital Products

Beside the finalization of upcoming products such as the CyberVisionPPC and the BVisionPPC graphics cards, phase 5 digital products (http://www.phase5.de/) has started a new development project for a stand-alone, PowerPC-based computer system, called the pre\box, which will use the licensed AMIGA OS 3.1 and a further advanced version of the PowerUP System Software to provide Amiga compatibility on the AMIGA OS/Workbench 3.1 level under CyberGraphX V3.

"The license agreement that we have signed with Amiga International allows us to start the development project of this new machine, which had been in conceptual design for several months now. It is an important step for revitalizing the Amiga market, encouraging developers and rebuilding a market which is strong enough to maintain" says Wolf Dietrich, General Manager of phase 5. In a separate announcement Dietrich states that the A\BOX, the long-term technology project of phase 5 digital products, is postponed but not cancelled. "The A\BOX project will be continued with revised targets and specifications and with extended resources, based on the succesful introduction of the new product lines." Dietrich points out that the key for the survival of the Amiga and the Amiga market is the availability of new outstanding stand-alone hardware products as soon as possible, a goal which shall be reached with the pre\box design. "We need an expanding market in the very near future, or the battle may be lost for the Amiga computer system" he adds.

All systems will come as multi-processing systems with at least four PowerPC CPUs installed, which will allow them to provide an extremely high computing power at an outstanding price/performance relation.

The new pre\box machines will be targeting the medium and upper price regions for PCs or Personal Workstations, but are designed to provide stunning performance. All systems will come as multi-processing systems with at least four PowerPC CPUs installed, which will allow them to provide an extremely high computing power at an outstanding price/performance relation. "Multi-processing has been one of the most important goals, if not THE most important design goal for phase 5 digital products in the past 18 months" explains Wolf Dietrich. "It is here where alternative technology can offer advantages and superiority over the mainstream products in the PC market. While our current PowerUP product line, which consists of upgrade cards for existing machines, helps the user to update his system and secure the investments made in existing hardware and software, it is a challenge to build new stand-alone hardware products which can price-wise compete with the mainstream PCs — especially under the impression that PC systems are blown out at dumping prices regularly, and that a PC system you buy today maybe outdated and nearly worthless in less than a year."

Consequently, the company does not plan to build single-CPU systems which would have to compete at a similar performance level with Intel-based systems, but wants to fully utilize the opportunities which have been given with the move to the PowerPC. "Developers who jump on the PowerUP bandwagon today can make their products ready for multiprocessing quite easily. Therefore it will be possible to take two giant steps — from a single-CPU 68k system to a Multi-CPU PowerPC system — within only one year, an impressive progress for the Amiga community which many have not thought possible" Dietrich adds.

The pre\box system is designed on a ATX formfactor motherboard and incorporates a fast SDRAM-based memory subsystem with initially up to 100 MHz memory speed. Depending on the actual bus speed of the PowerPC processors which are used, the processor bus also runs at up to 100 MHz. The four PowerPC processors, which are located on a separate CPU card, will be equipped with inline or backside caches, also depending on which type of processor is actually used. As the PowerUP System Software features a software-controlled cache coherency, the pre\box can even be equipped with CPUs which do not offer hardware support for multiprocessing, such as the PPC603e or the PPC750 (G3).

The pre\box system also has an integrated 3D graphics subsystem, which is connected via a 66 MHz PCI 2.1 bus with a peak performance of 264 MB/s and comes with eight MB of graphics memory. With this gfx sub-system, a powerful standard is provided as the minimum base configuration on which software designers can rely. But more than that: On the same 66 MHz PCI bus there is a special slot for a Voodoo2-based 3D accelerator card which is directly coupled to the built-in gfx chip. "We plan to provide, either on our own or in cooperation with other vendors, a Voodoo2-based solution as a powerful upgrade option" comments Wolf Dietrich. "We will not forget the demands of the serious gamers."

Also as standard, there will be an integrated Ultra-Wide SCSI-II controller and a 100 Mbit ethernet controller

available, which will allow usage of today's powerful UW-SCSI devices and provide fast network connectivity — a feature which will also support the distributed multi-processing concepts of phase 5 digital products.

For the use of inexpensive hardware expansions, a PCI bus with three standard PCI slots is integrated. This PCI bus runs at 66 MHz, but will also accept 33 MHz PCI boards. With the PCI bus integrated, development of new stunning hardware products for the pre\box systems is quite easy; more than that, developers can use standard PCI products and adopt them for the pre\box systems by simply writing software support for them.

Yet not decided is if there will be a socket for an optional 68k CPU left on the board. "In this next-generation product, the consequent option for using 68k software will be emulation. We are continuously encouraging Amiga developers to support our new MP software technologies and guidelines which we introduced with our PowerUP System Software, and those who follow these recommendations will be able to provide applications that utilize the vast power of our upcoming pre\box system right away. This is where efforts should be spent now" says Wolf Dietrich.

Beside these main features, the pre\box will offer all standard functionality which is expected from a computer system today, such as fast serial and parallel interfaces, a USB bus, and an EIDE interface for use of e.g. inexpensive CD-ROM drives or additional cheap harddrives.

The pre\box release is scheduled for the early fourth quarter 1998. The pricing of the pre\box system is already determined based on the current pricings for PowerPC processors. Currently it is planned to offer the following versions of the pre\box with the following suggested retail prices:

- *pre\box 604/800 with four PPC604e-200 MHz CPUs*
  suggested retail price:
  DM 3.995, US$ 1995.00, UKP 1495.00
- *pre\box 604/1000 with four PPC604r-250 MHz CPUs*
  suggested retail price:
  DM 4.995, US$ 2495.00, UKP 1895.00
- *pre\box 604/1200 with four PPC604r-300 MHz CPUs*
  suggested retail price:
  DM 6.995, US$ 3395.00, UKP 2595.00
- *pre\box 750/1200 with four PPC750-300 MHz CPUs, each with 1 MByte Backside Cache*
  suggested retail price:
  DM 8.995, US$ 4495.00, UKP 3395.00

These prices are valid for pre\box systems in an ATX minitower, including mouse and keyboard, as well as AMIGA OS 3.1 and the PowerUP System Software, excluding memory, harddrive and CD-ROM. For an entry-level configuration of memory, harddrive and CD-ROM (32MB, 4GB, 24speed) an additional DM 750, (US$ 375.00 or UKP 275.00) must be considered. (German and UK prices include VAT. US prices excl. local taxes, all prices are based on the current currency exchange rates. Specifications and prices are subject to change without prior notice.)

In order to support and encourage customers of PowerUP boards for existing Amigas, phase 5 digital products will offer substantial discounts on the purchase of pre\box systems to owners of PowerUP boards. "We want to provide security for the investments of the users today. Obviously, Amiga users and developers need to see a fast growing base of PowerPC systems in these days, in order to support the progress of developments. We want to encourage the users to invest in PowerPC technology now" comments Wolf Dietrich. Owners of PowerUP boards who later take advantage of the discounts on purchases of a pre\box system will not have to return their PowerUP boards to receive this discount, but can continue to use their PowerUP-Amiga as a stand-alone system or even use its performance from the pre\box via a link system which will be provided with the pre\box, and with which the networked multiprocessing feature of the PowerUP System Software can be utilized.

With this new product roadmap and variety of powerful and stunning products to come, phase 5 digital products underscores its position as the leading innovator in PowerPC hardware and system software development in the Amiga market. "We want to further support the Amiga market with these efforts" states Wolf Dietrich. "Part of our efforts will also be to support the developers, and to encourage them to develop for PowerUP with our best endeavours. We will do whatever is possible for us to make existing developers stay with the Amiga, and will also try to win back Amiga developers who have left the platform or put developments on hold. Recent releases of PowerUP compatible software products, which had been realized within just a few weeks by their developers, show how easy and efficiently existing Amiga software products can be ported to support the new processor and performance generation. To convince software developers, we also need to make them aware of the market potential and the outlook to the future that we offer. All users can support these efforts, too, by contacting their favourite Software vendors and requesting PowerUP versions of their software." AGM

An Amiga For the PC

Siamese Systems Is Accepting Pre-Orders for a PCI Amiga Board

By Stephen Jones, Managing Director, Siamese Systems, Ltd.

For immediate release 4th March 1998.

As you are probably aware, the Siamese System has been developed to bring the Amiga into the mainstream computer market to create a hybrid Amiga/Windows platform that can bring rewards to the Amiga owner by giving them access to the low cost PC components, and to the PC owner by bringing the richness of the Amiga software base. Initially the Siamese System worked with Serial (for RTG) and SCSI (for File Transfer), followed by v2.5 which now uses the Ethernet and TCP/IP protocol. Now we are working on Siamese v4.0 which is based around a complete AGA Amiga on a PCI card which can take a 33mhz 68040 or a 66mhz 68060.

This system has many aims in life which are as follows:-

- To give Amiga owners the Ultimate and fastest Amiga ever, and one that is fully backward compatible.
- To push the Amiga Alpha project into the next stage and giving the Amiga the Alpha chip power.
- To create the Ultimate Hybrid machine using Amiga / Macintosh / Windows operating systems in one box.
- To give the PC access to the Macintosh software market and creating a hybrid Macintosh / PC using this card.
- To give the PC and Mac owners a new software base of the great and inexpensive Amiga software.

However, we face a dilemma with the Amiga market in the position it is in with users holding back on investing in Amiga hardware until they see something happening at Amiga Inc. We are working on the Macintosh version of this product because we know there is a very large market for this innovative product, born out by the hundreds of e-mails received since the press release was sent out last week.

However, we are concerned about the lack of activity in the Amiga market. Even though the Siamese system has sold in reasonable numbers, being the best selling product at many dealers, this is not what we would consider selling in a strong enough volume to encourage us to invest the many thousands of pounds necessary to create a full Amiga version of the Siamese v4. This project is not just software and involves expensive hardware design work, therefore we must be financially very careful.

As many should be aware, I have backed the Amiga since 1988 and have stuck solely with this market until now, but financial pressures are forcing us to push into other markets to survive. Having read the announcement from Vulcan software I can only agree and applaud his brave and from the heart comments. I believe that by pushing into another market that is prepared to upgrade to newer hardware we can earn the revenues needed to create new and exciting Amiga products, and bring back the old Amiga user who could afford to support the development community. A knock on effect would be that these new PC/Mac users could later be turned onto the Amiga software market with a simple upgrade disk, we call this "Amiga by Stealth." As I hope you can see, this is very important for the future of the Amiga and can have a very beneficial effect on the Amiga developers by selling their software to Mac owners running on the Siamese v4 Amiga.

Now to the main point of this message posting, we need to be sure that there is a market for this great new Amiga product that we are preparing before we invest in the development. So we need to know how many people will order this product upon completion, are prepared to put down a deposit on the final price, and pay the balance within 30 days of availability. The retail price of this product excluding CPU is to be £399.00 including UK vat, and $499 in the US.

We are working the deposit on a sliding scale approach so that the bigger the deposit the more you will save on the final price. The chart is based on the UK price and this is the amount the UK and European price will be based on. Bear in mind that the deposit is non-refundable unless we do not deliver the product. Time for delivery would be about three to four months from the date of the final decision on whether this product should go ahead.

- 25.00 deposit
  Total price to pay inc. deposit — £375.00
  saving of £25.00
- £50.00 deposit
  Total price to pay inc. deposit — £350.00
  saving of £50.00
- £100.00 deposit
  Total price to pay inc. deposit — £325.00
  saving of £75.00

If you are a dealer, you can pre-order from the first batch and if you meet the right order quantities you can become a distributor for that territory. Obviously the same rule applies and a deposit must be paid up front. Please contact us if you wish to be a dealer and we will send you the special introduction prices.

There is a time scale on this, and if we do not reach near enough to the 500 units the product will have to be dropped, I am sorry but that is the way it has to be. We have invested everything in this Amiga market and can not do it any longer unless there are people who are willing to order the product. This is not a new idea and it happens in

many other areas where there is a very small potential market.

As you can see, it is worth paying the deposit; and as long as we meet a target of 500 boards we will invest the money needed into the Amiga version of the "Siamese PCI Amiga." This may seem like an extraordinary way to develop a product but the software is 80% complete and the hardware is 60% complete. However the development cost is too high when the Amiga buying public have become so lethargic about paying for new Amiga products and at the same time complain about the lack of development.

Remember, we are not a large company with deep pockets; we are an Amiga company working in the best tradition of the Computer market on a tight budget and with more ideas than money. I hope that you will see the sense in this and understand that we want this new Amiga to appear, but we cannot develop it just for fun, it must have a market to sell to. I have already had a large amount of interest in this board and I am confident that this confirmed order scheme will work, which is why I am risking a good flaming to put the reality out there to the community. I hope that this is acceptable to most Amiga users. The ones I have field tested this on have all been very positive and encouraged me to continue, so this is now up to you. Are you in or out?

For those who say how can it be faster than any other Amiga, well it works like this: All I/O, graphics display, sound and file operations will be processed by the host PC/Alpha processor, and the bandwidth across the PCI bus is about 10 times the Zorro3 bus speed. Therefore the 680x0 processor just sends a simple system request and carries on processing code. We expect to give between 50-100% effective speed increase for the processor being the equivalent of a 133mhz 68060. To back this up, the Amiga will have OpenGL using the Host PC and its graphics card to render and therefore again no work for the 68060. Finally, an average PC graphics card will always be faster than an Amiga card because of the increase in bus speed that this new system will have access to. Also, if this card is fitted into the Alpha, the gradual Amiga porting will give incredible performance increases way in advance of any PowerPC chip based card.

Finally, let me talk about money as this is very important. You can buy a cheap 233mhz PC for around 600.00. Add the Siamese PCI card and a processor from your existing accelerator, (if removable) and, for 1000, have the most innovative computer on the Planet.

What about games? Well, this card has a full AGA chip set on board, so most games should work without any problems through the Amiga Video output. Also, if you wanted to create a hybrid Analogue / Digital video system with your existing Genlock you could with this card. This is something sadly lacking in the budget video world. Again another Amiga first.

Please check out our web site (www.siamese.co.uk) for more details about the potential of the card and, if you want to join the plan, there is an e-mail form to fill in and we will send you the paper work. AGM

More On Siamese v4

Thanks — PowerPC and the Siamese v4 PCI Amiga — FAQ
By Stephen Jones, Managing Director, Siamese Systems, Ltd.

For immediate release 13th March 1998.

Firstly, I have been overwhelmed by the response to my first announcement on the 4th March by the amount of people who want to see this product on the market as I do. We received 200 e-mail orders within 5 days of the announcement going onto the Internet. We actually had close to 500 enquiries about this product, but obviously not everyone can make an instant decision and some want to know more, but 50% is very encouraging.

Obviously, these people have not all paid their deposits although they are starting to come through and are being put into a holding bank account until the final decision is taken. I feel, due to the fact that as most people wanted on average to pay £50.00 deposit, if they all come in before the end of the month we will go ahead with this Amiga version.

One question that half of the people have asked, is, will there be a PowerPC version? This is a simple Yes, but depends upon certain things happening in the right order first.

Conditions for PowerPC version:

1. *If the Amiga market waits for the PowerPC version, it will NOT happen, this is a usual trick of the Amiga community of waiting until the next version, which ultimately kills the development market. It can only happen if the original version is a successful product and we will then develop a new version later.*
2. *There needs to be a mainstream PowerPC software base which there is not as yet.*
3. *We will not offer the slow 200mhz PPC chips as they will not offer much more than our 66mhz '060 PCI card, check out our Web site for the explanation.*
4. *As long as Amiga Inc. develop a full blown PowerPC Amiga OS.*
5. *If it is a better option than our Samsung supported Project Alpha 800Mhz machine later in the year, for under £2000.00 complete, which we believe will outperform any PowerPC system including multiple processor systems, and have the 3D and 2D graphics to leave the Amiga competitors behind.*

I want people to understand that we are very serious about the Amiga, but we can only deliver products that people will buy. So, for a while, you will see us doing this until the Amiga market turns around and becomes a profitable niche. We want to do much more with the Amiga including, one day, an Alpha set-top box based around the Amiga OS and better chip set; but to do this we must develop the right products that are viable and not based on a wild imagination... in other words on what people actually want and NEED. Please read this FAQ for more information.

Siamese V4 PCI Card FAQ

Q. How does the PCI Amiga allocate its ram.

A. It has in this version 2mb Chip ram on board, which allows the chip set direct access to Chip ram without the complications of going onto the PCI bus. The Fast ram will use memory allocated on the very fast PCI bus. This will be allocated by the Host OS and will therefore support the facility of virtual memory if required, or this can be bypassed if wished. Memory will be allocated as needed or given at boot up time depending on the way decided. It will be very flexible for tight memory systems and if you have a lot of memory, which is cheap, it will be very fast.

Q. Does it have the Amiga chip set for Video and games?

A. The card has the full AGA chip set with a full Amiga Video output port which will be Genlock compatible, allowing the creation of a hybrid Analogue / Digital Video system to be created with the Scala program running fast titles over the top. This will allow Tape based Video editors to incorporate digital footage from the host PC and Analogue video to be combined.

Q. What about Video Toaster users?

A. How many time have Video Toaster users asked, "when will there be a PC Toaster?" Ok, less than "when will there be a PAL toaster," but still a lot of Video professionals have wanted to have the Holy grail of a Toaster on the PC or more so the Alpha. The Siamese v4 PCI Amiga card has a full but miniaturized Amiga Video slot on board. This, with a special adaptor and external box, will hold the Newtek Video Toaster card. Running RTG will enable the Switcher control panel to appear on the PC or Alpha display and the Toaster will have access to all of the drives and network of the Host machine. It will even be able to see the Digital video output from the PC/Alpha Digital video recording card while a PCI version of the Flyer is developed! (Are you listening Newtek?)

Q. What about a CPU slot to take A1200 or A4000 Cpu cards?

A. This, unfortunately, is almost impossible for a number of technical and physical size problems. Firstly, it would be incredibly complicated to integrate any existing Amiga card into the PCI Amiga system because of the

way they usually take over the system. From the physical point of view, there is no way that the PCI card bay could accept a plug-in card. There is just no room. Anyway, a new version would be available as an upgrade.

Q. How will the graphics performance compare to the Cybergraphics system?

A. This is hard to confirm until the product ships... however, with the PCI minimum bandwidth of 133mbytes/sec and Zorro3 at about 10% of this figure, the Siamese V4 RTG should be a LOT faster than existing Cybergraphics and probably the same, if not faster, than future PowerPC versions. Remember that the graphics are actually being pushed around by either an Alpha 533 processor or a Pentium. All of this is orchestrated by the Bus Master Amiga PCI card; and the slave Pentium processor just does what it is told.

Q. What about compatibility with CyberGL 3D?

A. Siamese V4 RTG supports OpenGL fully and, after talks with Phase5, the Siamese v4 RTG will support the CyberGL 3D system calls and convert them where necessary to the OpenGL equivalents. The System will use the host PC to handle all of the number crunching while the Amiga processor can sit back and get on with the next job in hand. This is what we mean by Multi-Processing. We are basically falling back on the original ideas of the Amiga but using modern cheap components to achieve the great speed needed, and letting other people design the instruments in the new Amiga orchestra.

Q. Why is the 66mhz 060 going to compete with the 200mhz PowerPC based A1200 and A4000 systems?

A. This is a brief answer and a more detailed one is on this web site. Basically, on average, an operation on a RISC PowerPC chip will take more CPU cycles than the 68060 chip. This is not in dispute. Probably, on average, a two to one basis. Therefore, roughly speaking, the 68060 could, if it was converted to RISC based performance, be about 133mhz. Next, the fact that PowerPC must emulate the 68000 instructions will slow down execution of 68000 code that is not rewritten. ie. 95% of Amiga software and the entire AmigaOS. Finally, the PowerPC chip is sitting in, basically, a 5-year plus old design with very slow graphics and Chip communication and ram access speeds. Whereas the Siamese PCI 060 card is in a state-of-the-art PCI motherboard with potentially a 233mhz and upwards slave processor and fast PCI bus system for very little cost.

Q. What about 16 bit sound performance and existing Amiga 8 bit sound?

A. Because all PCs have high quality 16-bit sound, the Amiga will have access to this through an AHI driver, which we hope will be taken up as part of any future OS upgrade. The existing Amiga 8-bit Audio will run through the PCI Amiga card and be routed through the mixer on the PC sound card. Should you have a better sound card in your PC like the Yamaha XG sound card, then the Amiga will have access to a Wave-based Synthesiser.

Q. What do Gateway and Amiga Inc. think of this product?

A. Ask them.

Q. You talk about the Alpha porting project, how does this card help?

A. The Porting project is something that is a long term aim of this company and one that we cannot do alone. A number of things must be in place before we go ahead with this porting process. Namely the Amiga OS must be firstly assembled into a form that can be converted, which has not been done as yet. Then the entire OS C source code needs to made available to us. As to the actual question, the card will handle all non-ported code and allow it to run with full backward compatibility, including the Amiga chip set calls. The Alpha based Amiga has the potential to take on any processor or even Multi-Processor system that may come along one day.

Q. Will it be able to play Amiga games?

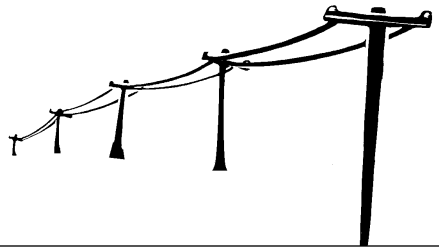
A. Games, games and more games. Basically, if the game will run on an A1200 with 040/060 then it should work quite happily on the new card. Quake and Doom should fly on this system. Although the PC version would run at the same time if you wanted, by enabling two player mode on one machine via a direct TCP/IP link up! AGM

Quote of the Month

We have nothing against ideas.
We're against people spreading them.
…General Augusto Pinochet of Chile

BBS News

The Best of The BBS Uploads
Selected by Bill Raecke



If you are using your Amiga to connect to the Internet, you are probably using Miami. If you aren't, you probably ought to check it out. It can't be beat for speed, features and ease of use. This month Miami has been upgraded to version 3.0a. The latest version adds lots of nice features including the ability to connect via a LAN. There are multiple files:

- *MIAMI30A-GTL.LZX,*
- *MIAMI30A-020.LZX,*
- *MIAMI30A-MAIN.LZX,*
- *MIAMI30A-000.LZX, and*
- *MIAMI30A-MUI.LZX.*

Need to kill a little time? If you enjoy a game of Solitaire once in a while, I have just the ticket. Soliton is the best Solitaire game I have seen. It's MUI based, so it looks good. It has beautiful graphics and animated card turns so it plays well. You may already have this one in your collection, but this month we got an update to version 1.60b. It's a beta version, but I've been using it without problems. The new version runs faster with smoother animation, and has several other improvements as well. Look for SOLITON160B.LZX.

There are two pictures this month that are well worth adding to your collection. PELICAN2.JPG is a beautiful picture of two pelicans in flight. PARROT10.JPG is a closeup of a parrot grooming himself. The colors are amazing.

Of course, we have the usual selection of datatypes:

- *AKSVGDT43175.LZX for Superview pics*
- *AKPNGDT43175.LZX for PNG pics*
- *AKLJPGDT43175.LZX for lossless JPEG pics*
- *AKJFIFDT43175.LZX for JPEG pics*
- *PCD-DT43.2.LZX for photo cd's*
- *MPEGSDT104.LZX — an MPEG System datatype*
- *MPEGVDT204.LZX — an MPEG video datatype*
- *MPEGADT201.LZX — an MPEG audio datatype* AGM

Meeting Notes

Amiga By-The-Loop Meeting
Johnny C. Kitchens

February usually means cold weather which brings all sorts of problems to the area, but this year we got a big break. I actually saw some trees blossoming out on the second day of the month! I wish I everything else could be this nice. News on the Amiga seems to be scarce, though there is plenty of news revolving around the Amiga. They keep licensing new companies to the Amiga. They announce new sales to keep things moving along. They just keep putting off any great news on what they are doing. Anticipation...

Our meeting for the month almost did not get to be. A small mix-up had us waiting for someone to decide our fate. After a near miss we got underway. It was sort of a split meeting. We had a 1200 undergoing improvements at the back of the room, and a 4000 presenting the main show at the front. David Campbell brought his 4000 and new scanner along to show that the Amiga can handle scanning just fine. Using a shareware software package he put the scanner through its moves and it worked flawlessly. With the price of scanners falling rapidly, everyone seems to be trying their hand at digitizing. Some scanners have dropped below the $100 range, but if you want a good one, please look into the SCSI scanners. You will be glad you did.

The other part of our meeting revolved around a 1200. Fellow club member Okley Moss was having a hard time navigating the Internet, and asked me to take a look at it. The biggest problem I could see was lack of memory, and or the wrong kind. He had a PCMCIA memory expansion card plugged in, but it only provides 16 bit memory so it is slow. After loading one page he was down to 23k of RAM left. Definitely not enough! Later while visiting Commodore Country, I came across a memory expansion card for the 1200. It used one 72 pin SIMM and it had a math chip on it. It was just $40. I told Okley about the card and that I had an eight meg SIMM for $10. For $50 Okley improved his 1200, and now enjoys the Internet!

March 1998 seems to be out of step this year. Snow fell for the first time this winter. Though spring starts in March, it seems that winter suddenly woke up and realized it had nearly slept through its season. It gave us winter late, but it was the kind of winter I could live with more often. The biggest news I saw for the month of March on the Amiga was the announcement that phase5 had upped the speed of the CyberstormPPC to 233MHz! The 233MHz PowerPC shows performance equal to or greater than the 333MHz Pentium II now powering PCs! This little bit of news was enough to get me interested. I hope to have one in my hand very soon. More later after it happens. I have been without my computer for over two weeks as I type this. I sure miss it...

This month's meeting had us redoing a previous meeting. Last year we attempted to give a printer comparison, but failed due to technical problems. This year things went much better. We used Ned Kelly's 4000 with his newly installed 68060 accelerator, just acquired from me, an Epson Color Stylus 800, an Epson Color Stylus 600, and a Hewlett Packard Deskjet 855. We also had two of the latest printer driver packages to compare. They were Studio II Professional and Turbo Print 6. Our first test used the 800 and Studio II. Things went smoothly, but the printing was very slow. All sorts of reasons were pitched at the problem, as the printer slowly printed each small strip very slowly. Then it struck me! We had just installed the 68060 that day, and no adjustments had been made to the 4000. The caches in the 060 were off! Turning them on got a WOW as the printing sped up nicely. While it continued to print I made further adjustments that really got things going along fine.

We printed out some pictures on the three printers, using the two packages. Everyone agreed that the Epson was the winner, and each of the software packages had their advantages. Turbo Print is fast, but it was using most of the 060's CPU power to make it that fast — nearly 98% sometimes. Studio II had an edge in print quality, but was slower, although it was using a third of the CPU's power. The HP had a disadvantage in the test. We were forced to use a lower resolution, due to HP not releasing its driver information for anything but Windows. I have seen the 800 series HP print and they do a great job, but the Amiga cannot access the 600x300 resolution it offers. This means we were forced to compare its 300x300 resolution with the Epson's 1440x720. Which do you think will look better? Amiga Inc., has announced that Epson will work with them to develop drivers for the Amiga, giving a further reason to consider the Epson for Amiga users.

All in all, the meeting was a great success. You missed a truly enlightening meeting for the month of March!

For me the month has been one big WOW. Though I have been forced to live without my computer while waiting for a new CPU, it has been one big Amiga month. A couple of days after the meeting I got to take my first airplane ride... and go to my first Amiga computer show in St.Louis — the Gateway 98 Amiga show! That's another story...

The MCCC

Statement of Purpose: The Metroplex Commodore Computer Club is a not-for-profit organization devoted to the collection and dissemination of computer knowledge, to the encouragement of computer education, and to the use of Amiga (formally Commodore) computers in the home, at school, and in business.

Legal Stuff: The MCCC is not connected with Gateway 2000 or Amiga International. The Amiga product name is a registered trademark of Gateway 2000.

Meetings and Membership: Our meetings are open to all. Family membership dues are $24 per year or $15 for six months and entitle the member to a mailed copy of the newsletter and free access to the club's extensive public domain and shareware software library. An additional $12 annual fee provides access to the MCCC multi-user Bulletin Board System.

AGM Journal

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Advertising: The AGM Journal accepts two kinds of advertising. Member ads are those which are submitted by a member and which are not of a commercial nature. There is no charge for member ads. Commercial ads are those which advertise multiple like items for sale. Rates for camera-ready commercial ads are as follows for a single month or (prepaid consecutive three months): Full Page — $36 ($96); Half Page — $18 ($48); Quarter Page — $12 ($32); Business Card — $6 ($16).

Articles: Members are encouraged to submit articles. Articles may be submitted in virtually any Amiga-generated format. They may be uploaded to the MCCC BBS or sent via e-mail to wraecke@arlington.net, or submitted on disk.

Deadline: The deadline for submissions to the AGM Journal is 7am of the fourth Saturday of each month. Payment must accompany all ad copy. Make checks payable to MCCC and mail c/o Bill Raecke, 2614 Charolais Way, Arlington, Texas 76017.

Extra Copies: Extra Copies of the MCCC News are available at $1 per copy. Orders should be forwarded with the required fee by the newsletter deadline.

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BBS Numbers

Metro	28,800 BAUD	817-268-4191
Local	28,800 BAUD	817-280-9900

Web Site

http://www.startext.net/np/agm/

Calendar Of Events

Apr 7 *MCCC Board of Directors Meeting*
7:30 pm — Ned Kelly's place
2709 Wolff Drive, Arlington

Apr 14 *Amiga By-The-Loop Chapter*
7:30 pm
Bell Helicoper Training Facility
Trinity at Norwood, Hurst

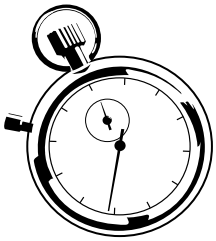
Apr 16 *Amiga North Dallas Chapter*
7:30 pm
SMU Building
Collins Blvd. & International Parkway
Richardson
(Park in ALECATEL employee parking across partkway)

Apr 25 *May Newsletter Deadline*

Membership Watch

Memberships Expired in March

Crystal Eikanger *Brad Jackson*
Troy Starr *Sean Wilson*



Memberships Expiring in April

David Davidson *Thomas Dye*
Douglas Guinn

The AGM Journal

MCCC
P.O. Box 813
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http://www.startext.net/np/agm/ *Note Membership Expiration on Label*