

Editorialites

Inexpensive PC, anyone?

I periodically rediscover a certain realization — the world of computing is a very different place now than it was when I first got into it. In the eighties, the top computers were eight-bit wonders, good for games or getting some office work done, and best of all, they were inexpensive, from \$100 to \$500, up to over \$1000 if you wanted a “serious” computer like an IBM PC or an Apple II. Admittedly, inflation would push those prices up a bit for today, but surely the equivalent of a \$200 Atari or Commodore computer would not cost a thousand bucks today. The Amiga grew out of those times, when it was not shameful to have your own custom formats, hardware, or operating system, and value for money was a larger force in the market. That has obviously changed. The crippling majority of all systems are based on Windows, which forces everyone else to adopt at least some of that operating system’s “standards” in order to seem like part of the market. The real killer from then to now, for me at least, is that there are no truly inexpensive systems to be found anymore, unless you count things such as game consoles or WebTVs, or resort to pre-owned hardware.

I’m sure people who can build their own systems in their sleep will tell me I’m wrong, but the real truth is in the stores, where the average person shops for a computer. You’re unlikely to find any desktop system for less than 6 or 7 hundred, or laptop for under \$1000. It’s not because it can’t be done (as the system-builders know), it’s more a symptom of the market. We have Intel

and their clones constantly making bigger, faster, hotter, more expensive CPUs, and Microsoft and the rest of the software makers coming up with bigger, but not necessarily better, gluts of code to take up the slack. Each new software release or OS upgrade places much bigger demands on the hardware than the last, leaving us with our expensive cutting-edge machine pushing obsolescence in a matter of months — at least that’s how it often seems. It’s not a system that’s likely to change either, since it’s a push to keep the consumer spending money to keep up. The not-as-cutting-edge machines are naturally less expensive, but those same forces of movement pull the older technology off the shelves before they become actually inexpensive, however.

I find it quite ironic that the expensive, decked-out, obsolete-in-a-week com-

puter and the sub-\$300 console are both ideal for the same group — hard-core game players. From what I’ve seen, a hefty percentage of computer users today make use of their machines roughly the same as they did in the days of the Vic-20: Basic office work and the occasional game, though of course nowadays you can add web-surfing to that too. None of those activities are fundamen-

tally horsepower-intensive, so I think it wouldn’t be too tough at all to put together a 3 to 4 hundred dollar system, maybe even a \$100 system, to appeal to that market, and the more frugal side of it. Sure, it wouldn’t have all the bells and whistles, and might only run at 600 Mhz or so, but it’s not needed to do the same things you might have used a Commodore 64 to do 18 years ago. It’s a concept that has been tried before in various ways, from CD-I to WebTV to Email terminals, even to Palm Pilots and the like. Companies like Extreme computers are building fairly inexpensive PC-based Amigas (with the help of Amithlon), and it’s possible to turn a Playstation 2 into a Linux box for programming purposes. I’m just surprised no one seems to have the guts to produce and

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market a cheap Windows machine, where the answer to the question of “how fast

does it run” is “Fast enough,” and the answer to “How does this compare to that top-end Dell machine?” is “It’s 1200 bucks less.”

Better yet, tell them it runs quicker because it’s running Amiga OS.

...Eric W. Schwartz, Editor
AmiTech-Dayton Gazette,
March 2002

Great Truths

When your Mom is mad at your Dad, don't let her brush your hair.

...Ruth, age 8

Don't sneeze when someone is cutting your hair.

...Tommie, age 7

Puppies have bad breath even after eating a tic-tac.

...Julie, age 10

Never hold a dustbuster and a cat at the same time.

...Liz, age 9

When your dad is mad and asks you, "Do I look stupid?" don't answer him.

...Heather, age 16

Never trust a dog to watch your food.

...Patrick, age 10

Wear a hat when feeding seagulls.

...Rocky, age 9

Never ask for anything that costs more than five dollars when your parents are doing taxes.

...Carrol, age 9

Never tell your mom her diet's not working.

...Michael, age 14

Don't pick on your sister when she's holding a baseball bat.

...Joel, age 12

Never tell your little brother that you're not going to do what your mom told you to do.

...Hank, age 12

AmigaMCCC News

MCCC

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April Calendar

Apr 8 — Amiga By-The-Loop Chapter
7:30 pm — N.Richland Hills Community Ctr.
Loop 820 at Rufe Snow, N.Richland Hills

Apr 8 — MCCC Board of Director's Meeting
Approx. 10:00 pm — TGI Friday's
Loop 820 & Bedford Euless Road

Apr 18 — Amiga North Dallas Chapter
7:30 pm — SMU Building
Collins Blvd. & International Pkwy, Richardson

Apr 27 — Newsletter Deadline — 7:00 am

Editor's Comments

Look for more "Great Truths" on the website. There wasn't room to include them all here.

You'll also want to check out the latest Executive Update from Bill McEwen. There's good news for Amiga fans. But, as above, there wasn't room to include the article here.

I should have the website updated by the first.

...Bill Raecke