

Ben Hermans Interview

This is an interview that was transmitted on 24/07/04 from Amiwest 2004 with Ben Hermans of Hyperion fame. Ben answers questions to Bill "Tekmage" Borsari on the Amiga's future and the OS 4.0 current development being conducted by Hyperion.

[Note: This article has been edited for space. The complete interview is available on the club website.]

Q: Hi Ben, tell us what you are doing at the moment

A: I stepped down as Managing partner at Hyperion due to day job commitments. Still legal consultant—still hard to work away from Hyperion. My day job is keeping me busy and I also need to pay the bills!

Q: How do you feel about progression of OS 4 and your initial plans for it?

A: Initially we were going to do an Amithlon type solution initially: fairly easy, should have taken couple of months of work, however ultimately, not very satisfying.

With the present AmigaOS 4.0 development we wanted to give new functionality but give good compatibility to the previous OS. Richard Drummand is also here at Amiwest and is producing new version of UAE for total compatibility.

Q: How about changing OS 4 development priorities?

A: Some things have been added to development list but nothing has been

scrapped. We are getting there to completing list every day. USB support is coming along very nicely—now supports mass storage so may make it into next prerelease.

JIT is finished for a while but not integrated into OS. It will work but not transparently. The author of Pertunia is currently intergrating it into system. It is still in the works. Snap drivers: we have Radeon drivers and I am pleased to announce today 3D drivers for the Radeon! That will take a few weeks to hit website. It works ATM with Freespace that has been recompiled for AmigaOS 4. Shogo uses WarpOS and will take time to convert to the new OS. We will eventually release OS4 versions of our games for the community. We worked with Heinz Wrobel and he has been making a CrossDos replacement so you can use VFAT filesystem to use card readers and USB key chains. Lots of camera use mass storage protocol. This also supports long filenames and VFAT hard disks can be hooked up to the AmigaOne.

Q: Are we going to see updated 3D driver capability?

A: Multitexturing support, fixed pipeline and T&L. Radeon is closed format due to ATI not releasing all documentation. We have a back up plan which is secret ATM.

Q: Can we have a firm update on OS 4 release?

A: Ideally it should have already been released and every developer wants their stuff in there. End of August at latest. We will offer a lot of developer CD updates for download.

Q: Who specifically works on OS 4 development?

A: Lots of people have contributed to the development. It is unfair of me to name any individuals as that may upset other developers who I have forgotted to mention.

Q: Highlights of developers?

A: 30 people in 10 different countries. We have a font guy, keymap guy, filesystem speciliast—lot of expertise. There's not one developer or bunch of developers that I can name. There are also lots of beta testers as well.

Q: Where are the priorities?

A: CyberstormPPC will be released at the same time as A1. BlizzardPPC version is a testing nightmare and will come quite a while after.

AmigaOne is much cheaper than a CyberStormPPC and so is relatively better than classic hardware prices.

To go to x86 will be erroneous argument as there are so many mainboards to support.

Q:Future of platform?

A: Build desktop base to stable base to break even on the large investment made in development of OS 4 and the AmigaOne. Then branch out to other markets such as Kiosks, STBs, Servers making architecture all compatible.

Lots of versatility available. We had 8 arguments why we chose PPC and legacy was a factor.

Q: Any estimated price on MicroA1?

A: I don't know.. I expect it to be competitive to the developer AmigaOne board with graphics board already in it with some memory. Please remember that the costs have to bankroll this 32 man project and these guys want some compensation for their hard work.

Q: Key features in the OS in future?

A: Unlying technology in lots of places. Ulitimately KMOS will decide. OS4 is a strict desktop OS so lots of it is irrelevant for Kiosk areas which are economic successful markets. We have ideas for AmigaOS 4.1. We need of course to get OS 4.0 out the door first. New kernal functionality is an area we are looking at. An Office Suite and better web browsers. We need to call on best efforts from open source community.

Q: When will Amiga OS 4.1 be available—in a year or two years?

A: Not that long as we have re-written the OS for 4—lots of stuff kicked out. AmigaOS 4 has been a massive

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The Flea Market is coming — Saturday, October 23

<http://www.amigamccc.org>

September Calendar

September 13 — Amiga By-The-Loop Chapter
7:30 pm — University Center, Pedernales Room
W. First St. & S. West St., Arlington

September 13 — MCCC Board of Director's Meeting
Approx. 10:00 pm — TGI Fridays
Cooper Street just south of I-20, Arlington

September 16 — Amiga North Dallas Chapter
7:30 pm — Junkins Building, SMU
Dyer and Airline Extension Rd., Dallas

September 25 — Newsletter Deadline — 7:00 am

effort—32months and still running. We won't need to convert to PPC from 68K a second time. We can now also do the conversion a lot faster. due to experience. We are currently reworking memory management for Exec due to learning new things recently. Altivec support is currently being optimised. 6–9 months tops for update to the OS.

Q: How many users are there?

A: Hard to say. Close to 1000 pre-release CDs have been shipped but there is a shortage of A1 hardware—only a few boards left. This hardware has shifted fast. Around 1000 is a satisfying number.