

LCD Monitors

When I write these articles, I either get semi-philosophical about the state of Amiga stuff, write about things outside the Amiga that interest me, like “retro” videogames, or I write about something specific within the Amiga world. This will be one of the latter types of article.

Flat LCD monitors have become very popular in the home computer world, to the extent that you’re likely to find more LCD monitors in your local computer or electronics store than CRT (Cathode-ray tube) monitors. They’re undeniably convenient, with a smaller footprint and lighter weight than CRTs. They’re also higher quality and lower cost than they used to be not all that long ago. I’ve gotten two LCD monitors rather cheaply, both at Wal-Mart (home to cheap stuff), both quite reasonable, if not stunning quality. There are articles and other documents about LCD monitors, and for the most part they give good advice. First off, especially with Amigas, be sure to check the resolutions and horizontal/vertical sync rates in the monitor manual, and use your CybergraphX or Picasso mode editor program to match these as best as possible before hooking up the LCD. CRT monitors tend to operate over a fairly wide range of sync rates. LCD monitors tend to have narrower ranges, which is why it pays to read the manual. LCDs have two main disadvantages over CRT monitors. Some have issues with view angle, and the image can fade or change

color depending on the angle at which you view it. If you can see the monitor working before you buy it, be sure to see how the picture looks from the sides, and above and below the screen. Even on good ones, the on-screen colors can change subtly if you do so much as shift in your seat in front of it, so if you’re doing graphics work where color accuracy and consistency is important, you may be better off with a CRT monitor. LCD monitors also tend to have a slower “pixel response time” than CRTs, though far better than earlier LCDs. This becomes apparent as a dimming or blur when high-contrast things move on screen, like white text on a dark background, or games with lots of on-screen motion. If these issues don’t matter to you, or are outweighed by the convenience of an LCD monitor, then go for it — or wait, because they can only get better and cheaper from here.

In my playing around with my Pegasos 2 and MorphOS, there are a few things you should be aware of, especially if you like games. They’re also available for Amiga OS too (best to have a PPC or OS4 though). One is SDL, a direct multimedia layer for games and other applications which can be graphically demanding. It came out of the Linux community, but has been ported and adapted to just about everything. The layer takes the extra work out of making games that work on a variety of audio and video hardware, and make use of them in a way comparable to the days when Amiga game programmers would throw out all remnants of the OS to

get that extra bit of speed or RAM. Another related, though not necessarily connected system is the various forms of OpenGL, such as TinyGL on MorphOS or Warp3D on Amiga OS. This allows the system to exploit the 3D hardware in most modern video cards, for visuals to (hopefully) rival PCs and game consoles. I haven’t got a lot to show this off yet, though I have gotten the GL version of the original Quake, which is impressive compared to the same machine running non-GL Quake, which does all its to-screen rendering in software. The GL screen display is much smoother and faster-moving than the software-rendered version, with subtler lighting effects and glowing objects. The pixelated effect seen when close to a wall is replaced with an anti-aliased version. Modify a few settings, and you can now see through the water’s surface (you know, like water). This slows down the display update substantially though, because it’s rendering more than it needs to. I look forward to seeing more OpenGL games with well-optimized code. A MorphOS port of Quake 3 is out, which I hope to try out sometime, if I can find a cheap copy of the PC game for the necessary data files. It’s all most definitely worth a look.

By Eric Schwartz
The AmiTech-Dayton Gazette,
October 2005

A New Partnership

Gothenburg, Sweden, September 24th, 2005
Guru Meditation and Troika NG are pleased to announce a joint partnership in creating the next generation AmigaOS 4.0 motherboard.

Ever since Guru Meditation first heard about Troika, they gathered every little bit of information about their proposed board. Finally, contact was made. Troika, who greatly respects the business Guru Meditation has built up in short time, found it very easy to partner with them. Resources provided by Guru Meditation are now being utilized by Troika's project "Prometheus." Troika believes that with the additional resources that Guru

Meditation is providing they double or triple their effective man hours to finish the project faster, and thus bring the board to production sooner!

Andreas Loong of Guru Meditation said, "With this injection we hope to see the board ready and in production earlier than expected. It also means some interesting possibilities for the future." He further added, "Looking at the specifications and the current shortage of hardware in the market spurred us on further, and we believe this will be a very nice addition, especially as a developer board. However, developer boards doesn't rule out other configurations, and we are confident that Troika and Guru Meditation is a winning combination."

Josh B. of TroikaNG commented "Guru Meditation is

AmigaMCCC News

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November Calendar

November 21 — Amiga By-The-Loop Chapter
7:00 pm — Grand Prairie Public Library
901 Conover Drive, Grand Prairie

November 21 — MCCC Board of Director's Meeting
Approx. 9:30 pm — Location TBD

November 26 — Newsletter Deadline — 7:00 am

very well known for good quality service and support in the AmigaOne Community. We are so pleased for Guru Meditation to bring additional resources into the Troika design."

The Amy'05 is a mini-ITX form factor computer based around the PowerPC 750FX microprocessor. It is intended to be a low cost, legacy free system aimed at the embedded/home server market running versions of Linux and the Amiga OS4 operating system. Although modest by modern hardware standards, Amy'05 has been designed in such a way as to leverage the highest performance possible with enough system throughput to make the best use of the PPC processor. The design has very much been balanced for performance and price.