

## Amiga Led The Way

It seems to be the time for anniversaries in the Amiga market. August marked the tenth year since the very first public release of the MorphOS operating system. Back then it was restricted to Amiga systems with PowerPC accelerator cards by Phase5. Fitting as MorphOS was the end result of Phase5's early development work to bring the Amiga operating system to the PowerPC CPU, before they had the rug pulled out from under them by circumstance and ruthless competition for other developers.

Much as Phase5 no longer exists in its late-nineties form, MorphOS is quite different from its early self, and different from the early intentions of its developers as well. At a recent show, a "technology demonstration" was made showing MorphOS running on a Powermac G5, a big step up from the G4 eMac and Mac Mini currently supported. At this point the demonstration was more a proof-of-concept than a practical application, and no promises were made. Currently it's easy to assume that any G5 Mac support is well off into the future, with more G4-based models like the Powermac and (hopefully) Powerbook/iBook coming first. Still, I would imagine a lot of MorphOS fans are chomping at the bit for G5 support, which would be some extreme horsepower for our Amiga software on an Amiga-like operating system.

The other anniversary here is the true biggie. July marked twenty-five years

since the official debut of the Amiga 1000 computer under Commodore. One can only imagine how far the system might have gone if Commodore had a handle on how to market it properly, or at least hold fast to the desktop video niche the Amiga practically invented and had to itself for a few years. There have been a few historical tributes by various people and groups, including a video from Hyperion with a visual depiction of the development of the Amiga operating system software. I have plans for my own animated 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary tribute, but with all reasonably ambitious projects, I might be lucky to finish it before the year is over, so I won't make any guarantees. Perhaps its completion will be something like the actual Amiga 1000's release—announced in the summer, but actually getting in

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the public's hands shortly before Christmas. I'll try my best not to disappoint, again like the Amiga.

After twenty-five years, the Amiga is probably not as well remembered as it should be. The victors write the history, which means a lot of people probably think the first "microcomputers" from the 1970s ran an early version of Windows 95. It's

unfortunate, as the Amiga made such a huge contribution to home computing as a whole. There are many things that, while the Amiga might not have invented them, it refined them and brought them from the realm of expensive professional systems to the home user. The Amiga's custom co-processors for graphics and sound, along with their ability to do their own thing independently of the main CPU, was its big highlight at its height. It was a pretty unique approach at the time, but now every system worth its salt uses a "GPU" of some description, following the Amiga's lead of independent graphic and sound co-processors and running ahead with it in the form of video and sound cards, often with their own dedicated memory.

It's truly ironic that Windows PC users back in the day often dismissed the Amiga as an inexpensive game machine, when the later Windows-dominated gaming market demanded the most expensive hardware for the best performance (while most non-gaming uses were far less demanding).

The Amiga's small, fast, and efficient operating system, with full preemptive multitasking (AKA the "good" kind of multitasking) was a powerful feature since the early 1.x versions. It was also the only consumer-level system with multitasking for a long time. Mac and Windows would eventually work their way up to preemptive multitasking capabilities, but took years, major rewrites, and the proliferation of hardware memory protection to do what the Amiga was already doing close to a decade

earlier. They didn't do it running from a floppy disk either. The Amiga's HAM (hold-and-modify) graphics mode was stunning in its ability to display the system's full palette of 4096 colors at once, even more stunning in that it displayed 12 bitplanes worth of data using only six (or on later AGA machines, between 18 and 24 bits using eight) at a slight cost in image quality. We didn't know quite what to call it at the time, but now such things are known as "lossy image compression," and commonly used now in such things as JPEG images and MPEG video (a different form of compression, but it's all about cramming a lot of image data into a small space).

The Amiga practically invented the concepts of "multi-media" and "desktop video," although like the lossy image compression, others were coining the terminology for the things we were just doing. The Amiga may have been surpassed in capacity, and lost its niche as digital video supplanted the analog, but its very presence left its mark on the industry, showing many a better way to do things.

It's noteworthy that upon its debut, the Amiga already had the majority of features people take for granted on computer systems today, such as full-color graphics (capable of 3D imagery even), digital stereo sound, and a multi-tasking operating system. All that's missing is the ubiquitous mass storage, USB, and network/Internet support of today's systems, and that's

mainly because most of that wasn't available to the average consumer in 1985 (or even invented yet in USB's case). If only the competitors listened a little bit harder to the Amiga's example, maybe we wouldn't be so frustrated with the systems that supposedly "won" the battle for the marketplace. Who knows where computers will be in another 25 years, but as long as some Amiga influence remains, it won't be all bad.

...by Eric Schwartz  
from the AmiTech Gazette, August 2010

## An HDMI Replacement?

According to the HDBaseT press release, LG Electronics, Samsung Electronics, Sony Pictures Entertainment and Valens Semiconductor are working to kill HDMI. They are trying to replace it with a new standard which will transport the video and audio signals through an ethernet cable. The new standard will be called HDBaseT.

In the past when industry groups create new standards for audio and video delivery they create a proprietary cable to go with it, but with HDBaseT any Cat 5e/6 cable that you might have laying around will get the job done.

"The cornerstone of HDBaseT technology is 5Play, an unrivaled feature-set that converges full uncompressed HD video, audio, 100BaseT Ethernet, high power over cable and various control signals through a single 100m/328ft CAT5e/6 LAN cable. HDBaseT has the bandwidth to support the highest video resolutions such as full HD 1080p as well as 3D and 2Kx4K formats. HDBaseT is the first to provide all-in-one connectivity, making it possible for a single-connector TV to receive power, video/audio, Internet and control signals from the same cable."

The goal of the technology is to allow all of your devices to be networked together which will allow communication and media sharing throughout the entire house. The technology is expected to be available by the second half of 2011. Companies will be able to license the technology this year which means we should see some of devices show up at CES 2011 in January.

...by Brandon Boyce  
URL: <<http://bit.ly/cCikpw>>

## September Calendar

September 15 — Amiga-By-The-Loop Chapter  
7:30 PM — South Grand Prairie Library  
760 Bardin Road, Grand Prairie

September 15 — Board of Director's Meeting  
Approximately 9:15 PM — Location TBD

September 25 — Newsletter Deadline — 7:00 AM

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