

The Amiga — Past and Present

As I write this, Chinese New Year, which I do honor, is here. The next 15 days are at best unusual in my home. I find myself looking back on a number of things right now as I prepare for things to come. It's been a long run. Back when I graduated High school, 3 decades ago, there was an event held in Chicago in June. It was a computer show called CES. Now at this time hardware was no longer the big thing. IBM and Apple, two of the biggest contenders in the PC market, didn't even attend CES. Software though was a huge seller. Even then there was some new hardware to be found at the show. Atari showed off its new high-end system the "Atari 1400 XL" and Microsoft was showing, at a private party, the Japanese MSX-standard home computers due to arrive in the US in the next year. Commodore also showcased two new computers, the Plus/4 and the Commodore 16. However at this show there was something very special. Compute! magazine reported this on it: "What might be the most advanced personal computer ever

designed was shown to the world behind closed doors..." They also stated on the prototype system "graphics are a whole step ahead of any personal computer now on the market. This computer is potentially powerful enough to make an IBM PC look like a four-function calculator." Even though it didn't release on time for Christmas, it did a year after that show and it awed, amazed and even worried folks at the show. The code name of that computer at the show was "Lorraine." The Amiga Lorraine. We've come a long way indeed. I bought the Amiga A1000 in 1985 shortly after it made it to the local stores. Never regretted it and never will. I have a PDF of that Compute! magazine for those curious. There isn't much on the Amiga but it's fun to see what was out there back then.

Now then, back in the present. For the few gamers we have, the



Arcade Evolution Amiga/C64 Joystick was released. You can find it at AmigaKit in 2 versions — left and right handed designs. Personally I'm going to pass on this one. It has a sturdy design and switches, but at about 8 x 8 x 2 inches so that you are supposed to rest your wrist on it. I can't figure out how to hold it and hit the twin huge buttons. Also, if the bright red looks-like-padded-vinyl case doesn't scare you, AmigaKit wants \$68.42 for it. (Amiga A600 users can't use it without an extra adapter.) V.A.M.P., which stands for "Virtual Amiga Multimedia Player," has a new version out, v1.08. This is actually a multi platform viewer available for AmigaOS3.x (A graphics card is needed), AmigaOS4, MorphOS, and even WarpOS (For those of us with PPC boards in our Amigas). This shows and plays more image, video and audio formats than you can shake a stick at. Even the old Moviesetter files Eric used to use. To do so though it requires you to get various codecs, plugins, datatypes and libraries — but they do give links telling you where to get them legally and mostly free. (WapDT are still shareware.) They state this as being portable. You can run it off a flash drive or such (however the plugins and such have to be in Libs:).

Also for Amiga, X-bEnCh O.93F — The Amiga Game Launcher & More is out. I reported a little on this a while back and this would seem to be a fair sized update. What this is is a front-end that can autoscan your hard drive to find all your whdload games or .exe and organize them in launching listings. It can also manage the software manuals listings and has an internal script system for non-whdload games and other things. You can find this and learn more on it at <http://www.jimneray.com/xbench.html>. “Amiga Future monthly News January 2014” is out. It’s easier to see some of it here <http://www.amigafuture.de> since it has a number of helpful items and a great number of games and software for both classic and the newer AmigaOS as well as for MorphOS.

Now then, for MorphOS we are currently at version 3.4. Most of what’s in this release was bug fixes. It introduces faster R300 graphics drivers, which gives improved 3D graphics and video playback on G5-based systems, and also support for non-native display resolutions on various PowerBooks. Onyx Soft has released 2 software updates, SnapIT v1.3 and ZoomIT.pobj v1.1. SnapIT, available for MorphOS, AROS, and OS4, is a fairly powerful screen

grabber. ZoomIT.pobj is a neat zoom tool for Ambient panels. I would advise checking out their page at <http://www.onyxsoft.se/> as they do have quite a few programs for AmigaOS, MorphOS and AROS systems. Hollywood 5 and Hollywood Designer 4 are available for purchase again. For those that don't know, “Hollywood is a multimedia-oriented programming language that can be used to create graphical applications.” I can’t seem to find a price anywhere for this and it would seem you have to email order@airsoftsoftwair.com in order to order it. Not sure if this offer is still available but the article I saw suggested that you could get the windoze version free with the Amiga version. Odyssey Web Browser (OWB) 1.23 was released about the middle of last month as well. I’m glad to say this seems to be a title that is well maintained and supported.

As some may have noticed I’ve been a bit “bitter” on some of the items here. This is not a lack of love for the Amiga. It’s a loathing for what some have done and are doing to it. I was listening to a song I downloaded earlier from YouTube. “Just Glue Some Gears On It (And Call It Steampunk).” It got me thinking: “Paint it red and it’s Amiga.” This seems to happen far too often anymore. Don’t get

me wrong — there are good and real things too. As funding allows it I will in fact be getting several NEW items for mine. “There are emulators that can run your stuff.” Or worse the “just use this and that program. Gimp, Photoshop, notepad.” Yeah whatever. Been getting a lot of that. Folks all over are saying to let go of my A 1200. That if there is anything I need from it just to emulate for it. Why do I need a real machine? I’ve heard many say that the Amiga, PPC and even MorphOS are dead. Even from some of those in our small group. Personally, by my way of thinking and definitions however, I can’t see it or understand it. I realize that my way of thinking and looking at just about anything is not very popular. The fact is that there is still new and real hardware and software being made for these machines. That alone speaks of life to me. 30 years ago we WOWed them. It’s taken them that long to get plug and play mostly working. My A1200 is currently still down, but she is far from dead and she still wows them.

Take care and be safe.

...by Michael D. Barclay
from the AmiTech Gazette,
February 2014

March Calendar

March 3 — Amiga-By-The-Loop Chapter
7:30 PM — Main Grand Prairie Library
901 Conover Drive, Grand Prairie

March 3 — Board of Director’s Meeting
Approximately 9:15 PM — Location TBD

March 25 — Newsletter Deadline — 8:00 AM

MCCC 4418 Sharpsburg Drive Grand Prairie, Texas 75052
<http://www.amigamccc.org>