



# MCCC NEWS



Fort Worth

July 2015

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## 30 Years of Amiga

In Amiga news, the A-EON train barrels along with the acquisition on DVPlayer, a commercial video playing application. This should be valuable if the software is developed further. I know little about DVPlayer myself, so I have no idea what advantages it may have over other video software ported to Amiga/Morph/AROS such as Mplayer or VLC. In Amiga gaming news, Cherry Darling, makers of "Voxel Bird Saga" and other games for Amiga, MorphOS, and mobile platforms, has released "Wings Battlefield," a head-to-head WW1-style air combat game playable against computer or human opponents (via split-screen or over network). Also the Turrican anthology is coming out, collecting all 3 games from the Amiga Turrican series in one volume for CD-32. You probably weren't expecting to hear about a new CD-32 release in 2015, even if it is a compilation. I know I sure wasn't.

With the press on the Amiga's 30th anniversary, I find myself wishing I could attend one or more of the events going on around the globe, but circumstances unfortunately prevent that. I can't let it go by completely unheeded, so I have been starting production (more like pre-production) on a new Amiga animation project, unofficially completing a trilogy of musical pieces with "Still Alive" and "Only Amiga" from

2008 and 2010, respectively. With each video I have bumped up the visuals, the first being a black and white animation, and the second a full color rendering. This time I am shooting for HD and 720P resolution, which has forced me to update and rework the 3D models and textures as I strive for a more photo-realistic look (within the limits of old software and my own 3D skill set). I fear I may be a bit too ambitious this time around, and it seems highly unlikely I'll have this project done in the next month or two while the celebrations are going on. Still, if I can finish it before the year is over, I'm willing to chalk it up as a win. Wish me luck, because I'm probably going to need some.

A few months back, I wrote at length about the reasons and relative merits of the Amiga's "planar" screen pixels. As I said then, a primary reason for adopting them was that they made more efficient use of smaller amounts of memory. Efficiency was all the rage back then, largely because RAM chips were expensive. Many Amiga veterans remember the days when a couple megabytes of RAM were more expensive than a couple gigabytes today, and that's not even adjusting for inflation. It's still fun to look at old computer publications to find some card with a few megabytes of RAM and a 40 meg hard drive retailing for a thousand or more, when now we probably would throw a fit if that 8 gig flash drive costs more than ten bucks. Still, cost of chips drives everything, perhaps more obviously back then. It's why the

Amiga 500 shipped with a measly 512K of RAM, and the A1000 before it had a measlier 256K. Step back to the 1970s, and the Atari 2600 VCS (the spiritual ancestor of the Amiga) had a mere 128 bytes of RAM for runtime data. There was no memory to hold a buffer for the screen. The programs and data on the fixed ROM cartridge generated the screen imagery in time with the television scan rate. This was a very challenging way to work, but it had its own inherent advantages as well. A talented programmer could use the nature of this method of display to make it seem like there are more graphic objects on screen than the Atari was built to display, by changing position, color and other information of an object while the scan progresses, making one object appear to be two different ones. Using display tricks like these and others, hardware originally designed for games like Combat, with two player objects firing missile objects in a simple playfield and little else, the Atari VCS could be made to do surprisingly complex games with many independently moving elements, with only a few K of ROM and less RAM than could hold the average text post on Twitter.

Stepping forward again to the Amiga, there remain a few pieces of that Atari legacy. While the Amiga generally has plenty of RAM to hold a display, it can still do a few scan-line tricks, thanks to the "copper." At a given scanline, the copper can interrupt the display to change something, like the color

value of something. This is seen a lot in games and demos to make a background that changes color without using up a lot of spots in the palette. Better yet, the screen mode or resolution could be changed as well. This was seen in some software, like a part of the interface that required a higher resolution or more colors than the main display. The paint mixer in Deluxe Paint 4, which used the HAM color mode regardless of what mode you were currently painting with, is a good example. A better example is when you have multiple programs each on their own screen, and you drag one down to peek at the one behind it. It works even though the different screens have different color palettes and different resolutions, thanks to the copper and the scan line interrupt, and a little Atari legacy—actually Jay Miner legacy, since he worked on both.

That concludes my ramble for the day. Stay safe, and I'll see you at the meeting.

...by Eric Schwartz  
from the AmiTech Gazette  
June 2015

## 5 Years of Amiga

July 23, 1985.

If you have an Amiga and or you are a big fan of the system, the date given here should be one to remember, as it is the day the Amiga made its debut. One source referred to that day as the day many a lesser silicon marvel of the decade became obsolete. On this day Commo-

dore introduced the Amiga to the world, and started a roller coaster ride that many enjoyed while others only endured.

Five years is a long time in the consumer market and the Amiga has made that time with ohhs and ahhs, controversy and change, love and hate. I wonder what the next five years will bring, but we can only take a look at the past five.

Several phrases came to be associated with the Amiga after its introduction. One still continues to pop up today: "It'll knock your socks off!" Ask yourself how many times that phrase has popped up since the Amiga began showing off its abilities. Another phrase which popped up and then faded away was "The Maserati of Computers." How long has it been since you heard that one?

Change has been a big part in the life of the Amiga over the past five years; some we've noticed, some may have gone unnoticed. Commodore toyed with several logos. A few even made it out into the world to be seen. Taking the famous checkered ball from the now famous demo was considered. They also considered a plain looking "A" as the logo. Thank you, Commodore, for not using that. A rainbow colored check mark was the winner. Well at least for a while. Now "Amiga" I guess you could say is the logo.

The Amiga itself has changed a lot. The 1000 brought us the Amiga and introduced the world to its new ideas (and can be found with and without the Extra Half Bright mode). It was on the market barely 18 months. Early in 1987 the 500 and 2000 showed up. Although these two at first appeared to be a compliment to the 1000, they replaced it completely. There were

two versions of the 2000—a German design and an American design. Commodore decided one was more prepared for the future than the other, and one passed away. I remember the rumors of the UX and AT versions that were to come out. Still waiting.

1988 gave us the 2000HD and the impressive 2500, both of which were just the 2000 with add-ons. Both of these have been modified in 1989. The 2090A controller has been replaced by the new 2091 and Quantum is now the Hard Drive. The 2500 has had its A2620 68020 CPU card replaced with a newer A2630 68030 CPU card.

A less noticeable change to the 2000 series has been the change in LEDs. The red power LED has given away to a green one. The disk drive went from red to amber. The hard drive changed from green to amber; Was this LED change for a reason?

Changes internally have been the big news. The true power of the Amiga, the now familiar custom chips, have gone through changes—one of which was name. Originally called Daphne, Portia, and Agnes, Daphne became Denise and is now about to change to Super Denise. Portia has become the Paula. Agnes changed to Agnus, Fat Agnus, and Super Agnus. There have been other names such as Obese Agnus heard, but Super was the official version. Now a newer version has appeared. With this new version the Amiga has moved from 512K to 1 meg and now 2 megs of chip ram. The Amiga has moved through three CPUs: the 68000, 68020, and 68030 with the 68040 just over the horizon.

Commodore has changed their handling of the Amiga, at times appear-

ing to some to be confused on how to handle their machine. At first they didn't want the Commodore name associated with Amiga so they hid it in the rear. Commodore wanted the machine to be considered as a serious business machine and felt that the name of Commodore would hurt the image. That changed with the 500 and 2000—the name "Commodore" was where you could see it. They tried to make sure that the Amiga was only available from the right places. I remember one dealer would only show the computer to you if you made an appointment. I bet that moved a lot of them. The advertising in the early days I'm sure created the question of "What is it?" You remember the robed man walking up to the Amiga, which was all but hidden, and he appeared to be lit up by the computer. It made sense, but only if you knew what they were advertising. For the good of the Amiga, recent ads have been more to the point.

Commodore's changes from machine specific to more generic construction such as the connectors in the rear have all been for the better. The 2000's ability to be configured or changed gave Commodore a good base to work with. And I've applauded Commodore for offering an upgrade from the 1000 to the 2000. No other company has considered doing that for its users. You have to take the good with the bad

in everything. At least there seems to be more good.

The introduction of the 3000 gives the Amiga a new push for the future and it appears that Commodore may be prepared to finally market the Amiga as they've never done before—trying to grab hold of the multi-media madness in the business world while enhancing the foothold that it has established.

It's been a bumpy road, but with the dedication of Amiga users, word of mouth, and proven performance, the Amiga has made it through these 5 years and is poised for the next 5 years of progress. The competition has made plenty of moves on the Amiga's previous advantages. Many of the things the Amiga has been doing for years are now the latest rage in the rest of the computer industry.

There's more to come from Amiga—just wait and see. Some of the competition has done their best to put the Amiga down—throwing the term "game machine" around the most.

It is estimated that current technology will be obsolete in just three years, but if we look at the C-64 you can see that a home computer can last long after technology has moved on. Just as it looks like the end of the 1000 due to advances in the 2000, along comes the aftermarket to provide an upgrade to move

the 1000 up to provide an upgrade to move the 1000 up to current standards. The same thing will surely happen to the 2000 if and when the time comes. You can buy lots of hardware to enhance the Amiga, lots of games, lots of video equipment, and lots of software. But one must wonder, where is the business software base that the competition enjoys? We have more places to buy Amigas in the form of dealers, even though Commodore has declared war on mail order. There are many new companies making products for the Amiga though we've lost many also. The same can be said for any other brand.

The Amiga is a survivor and few products on the market could possibly survive what the Amiga has survived. This should certainly make a point. The Amiga has something that buyers want, no matter what other problems there may be. July 1990 will be the month the 3000 will go on the market, but come the 23rd, take a moment and think a good thought for the Amiga and celebrate 5 years of fun and awesome computer graphics.

...by Johnny C. Kitchens  
from the MCCC News  
July 1990

## July Calendar

July 6 — Amiga-By-The-Loop Chapter  
7:00 PM — Main Grand Prairie Library  
901 Conover Drive, Grand Prairie

July 6 — Board of Director's Meeting  
Approximately 9:00 PM — Location TBD

July 27 — Newsletter Deadline — 8:00 AM

MCCC 2507 Tamaron Cove Cedar Hill, Texas 75104  
<http://www.amigamccc.org>