



# MCCC NEWS



Fort Worth

August 2015

Dallas

## Looking Back

It's another month in the Amiga sphere, and it's a time when Amiga users are focused more on the past than the future. July is when a number of different celebrations of the Amiga's 30th anniversary take (or have taken) place. The end of June gave us a celebration in Amsterdam, with several Amiga luminaries giving talks. Videos from the event can be found on YouTube by searching for "Amiga30.eu." On the 4th of July, there was an English 30th anniversary gathering in Stratford-upon-Avon. The US will have its big 30th event on the 25th and 26th at the Computer History Museum in Mountain View California. You can check out info on the event and even purchase tickets (or just make a donation) through their website at <http://amiga30.com>. I'd be there myself if I could have managed the journey, but I'm unable. I hope everyone who can go has the drive and opportunity to actually do so. I'll be eagerly awaiting news and info from the show.

My 30th Anniversary Amiga animation project plows forward, however slowly. I would probably be satisfied if I can finish it before the year is completely over, though I hope to do better than that. Like many of these projects, I spend almost as much time learning new things about old software as I do actually working or producing, trying to push my 3D software and my own skills further than I have be-

fore. I hope to show a thing or two at the meeting.

While not all the Amiga anniversary events are held in July, the month is the focal point for most anniversaries as it was the time of the official launch of the original Commodore Amiga system in 1985, which would retroactively be known as the Amiga 1000 when more models appeared later. The launch was a big, almost Steve Jobs-ian level event, featuring, among other things, famed artist Andy Warhol fiddling with an early grade paint package. You might remember a small news story some time back regarding the discovery of "Warhol's floppy discs" and the incredible effort and expertise that went into recovering the images from them. I seriously hope all that work applied to recovering data corrupted by age, or dealing with early software that may have predated the file standards we're used to, because I would be seriously disappointed if it was just that people were just too dim to think to put an Amiga disk in an Amiga drive.

Like many tech products, some aspects of the Amiga were rushed and corners cut to make a release date. Unfortunately for Amiga, that was the software and operating system. Early plans were to have a more UNIX-like OS with resource and memory tracking for stability in multitasking, but that would not be ready in time for the hardware's planned release. Instead, a different multitasking OS called TRIPOS was adapted, which could be finished up quicker. Even so, not everything

was finished or polished enough for prime time, so instead of putting the OS in ROM, a small section of the A1000's memory was dedicated to OS ROM code loaded from a "Kickstart" floppy disk. This early beta-level operating system, combined with the new challenges of writing software for a preemptive multitasking operating system (one that put the burden of keeping track of RAM and other resources on the programmer more than the system), the Amiga got a not-undeserved reputation for being flaky and unstable, which followed it past the point where updates put its actual stability about as good if not better than Mac and DOS/Windows systems of the time. Even so, the seeds of those cut corners of the mid-eighties can bloom even today, where a bad program can force a reboot even on modern OS4 or MorphOS systems that need to follow old Amiga paradigms to maintain software compatibility.

People with a poor sense of history don't find the Amiga very impressive today. After all, pretty much any garden variety desktop or mobile device today can easily outperform an Amiga, even emulate one, and those people often mis-remember the past of PCs and Macs as being pretty much the same as they are now, just slower and maybe with lower resolution or detail level. What they don't get is, going back to the window of the late 'eighties and early 'nineties, the Amiga was the only true machine that displayed full-color graphics with quality similar to photo-

graphs and video, moved them around the screen nimbly, and put them all together with sound and music of similar quality, all accessible and affordable to the average consumer. When properly taken advantage of, it played excellent games too, thanks to its early conceptualization as a game console/computer hybrid. It did this thanks largely to its custom co-processors, which could operate independently of the main CPU for better overall performance. This basic idea would later be co-opted by the PCs and Macs with their modern high-powered 3D video cards.

The Amiga could also be considered a pioneer in a less positive, though still heavily influential area. A couple of the “killer apps” for the early Amiga were the games “Defender of the Crown” by Cinemaware, and “Shadow of the Beast” by Psygnosis. These games were praised highly for their impressive visuals and audio that really showed of the power and advantages that the Amiga had over its contemporaries of the day. Also, neither of those games were considered very good to actually play, excellent examples of flash over substance. Still, many wanted the games for the visual showcases they are, regardless. While they were not Amiga-exclusive, “Defender of the Crown” and Cinemaware’s other titles were pioneers in what they liked to call “interactive fiction,” in the line of interactive movies or television like earlier text

adventures could be seen as interactive books. The “game” part of Cinemaware games was often thin, set pieces to hang the narrative and visuals upon. The audiovisual power of the Amiga was well-suited to this form of gaming just as well as it was to the fast-action arcading. So the next time you might be gaming on your X-stations or Play-boxes, and annoyed about some game with fantastic visuals but lackluster gameplay, or something that amounts to an extended movie with occasional breaks for you to press some buttons, you can thank the Amiga for those too.

...by Eric Schwartz  
from the AmiTech Gazette,  
July 2015

Unlike other projects, this one actually breaks apart the screen and controller so you can stuff it inside a smaller case. The upper half is the screen and Raspberry Pi while the lower half is the controller. You’ll need a Raspberry Pi and some intermediate-level soldering skills to get this project done, but it’s not terribly difficult. You’ll also need to 3D print the case, but thankfully there are all sorts of places that’ll do that for you. You’ll find all the parts you need and a basic guide over on Thingiverse.

<https://www.thingiverse.com/thing:920594>

## Pi-Boy Classic

We’ve seen all kinds of portable retro game consoles over the years, but Thingiverse user Jooxoe3i’s project manages to make the smallest device we’ve seen yet using a Raspberry Pi.



## August Calendar

August 3 — Amiga-By-The-Loop Chapter  
7:00 PM — Main Grand Prairie Library  
901 Conover Drive, Grand Prairie

August 3— Board of Director’s Meeting  
Approximately 9:00 PM — Location TBD

August 27 — Newsletter Deadline — 8:00 AM

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