



# MCCC NEWS



Fort Worth

March 2016

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## Amiga Hardware Items of Note

It has been many, many years since I've bothered to look at eBay for Amiga items but I happened to do so recently just to see what was out there. I was immediately drawn to two items which I thought may be of interest to readers of this newsletter. The first item was a listing by GGLabs (eBay username of gorlik) offering a new hardware creation of the venerable old A520 TV Modulator. This GGLabs is an "open source electronics" site where hardware designs are posted with complete plans for making electronics devices on your own (providing one has the soldering skills). It seems to be relatively new as there are only about a dozen projects at the moment. The current projects are related to legacy Apple computers, Commodore 8-bit computers, one Amiga computer project and some "generic" projects as well (visit [gglabs.us](http://gglabs.us) to see). The one Amiga project has been termed the "A520HD." This device plugs into the video port of any Amiga computer model and creates Component video (PrPbY) output for much higher quality video than one can get from composite video. This would be of great advantage to anyone that has a flat-screen TV with Component Video inputs. If one is not inclined to do their own soldering though, a completed unit can be bought from GGLabs via eBay for \$70. I've looked into building my own, or perhaps several of them, thus have researched the component cost and found that the electronic components alone would amount to between \$16-\$19. That just leaves the

phono jacks (easy and cheap to obtain), the DB23 connector (hard to find new but if one still has an A520 it could be removed and used) and lastly the printed circuit board (still looking into the cost for that). I noted that he also sells an A521HD unit on eBay which is a video card slot version but it is not listed on his web-site for some reason.

The second item I noted on eBay was from a guy (eBay username of morestuffuniwho) setting up his own business replacing capacitors on Apple computer motherboards, Amiga motherboards or even power supply boards (actually, it looks like he'll do it for practically anything electronic). Now for the Amiga, he has listed that he'll replace ALL of the capacitors on any Amiga motherboard for a fee of \$69 (includes shipping back to you). This seems like it would be a convenient avenue of choice for anyone with a malfunctioning Amiga as long as you are certain that a capacitor is causing the problem. For us Ohioans, shipping to him wouldn't be as bad as for other states as he is located in Michigan. The price listed is conditional upon you sending him just the motherboard though, if you don't want to disassemble the Amiga yourself, he will accept "whole" units but there'll be an extra fee for disassembly (plus the extra shipping cost to him). You can read more about this on his web-site at [maccaps.com](http://maccaps.com).

...Chris Heisman  
From the AmiTech Gazette  
February 2016

## The Latest News and Such

2016 has barely gotten rolling, but it's already been a busy time, especially in the area of celebrity deaths. One of those lost recently was Dave Needle, an engineer from the original Amiga team. Many were fortunate enough to meet him at one of the 30th anniversary events. His legacy will live on in the work he did for the Amiga series, as well as the Atari Lynx handheld and others.

Things have stabilized somewhat for me after the upheaval ending last year, allowing me some more time to get back to my computer projects. I've been working to make better use of the Mac systems that have been sitting around. My extra G5 tower, the one that didn't get turned into a powerhouse MorphOS workstation, is finally reassembled and working (sort of). The new-old system is prone to occasional freezes and crashes, and I'm unsure what the problem is. I believe it's probably hardware-related, but have yet to nail down the source of the problem. Considering the machine had been sitting for a long time in a humid place, the possibilities are many. I seem to be good at attracting flaky Mac systems, as the Powerbook I bought for portable MorphOS demonstrations has occasional issues as well, though seemingly not as bad as the one G5. While I haven't given up on it (yet), I have expanded the RAM on the G4 Mac Mini that was originally my father's, for a more reliable Mac system in the event that I can't increase the stability of the others. I'll say my Amigas rarely gave me these enigmatic troubles. They prefer to do

things more directly, like burning out a power supply wire.

I shall finish up my writeup this month with some bits of news and such. The Netsurf web browser for Amiga OS4 has a new version 3.4 released. A beta version for OS 3.5 is also available. It's nice to see choices in Amiga web browsing, though the developers say the Javascript support is incomplete on this. Other new releases include ZTools 2.3, also for OS4, a collection of system utilities available from AmiStore. AskMeUp XXL 2.4.4 is a quiz game for OS4, MorphOS, and Windows.

Finally, I thought I might direct you to this article on the evils of Microsoft that most of us "enlightened" Amiga folk already knew. <http://www.cracked.com/blog/4-awful-secrets-noone-telling-you-about-windows-10/> It's written for laughs, but there's still some reasonably disturbing truth. I remember once reading that the difference between a "good" company and an "evil" one is how it deals with unsuccessful products. While the good company either works to improve a bad product or abandons it for something better, the evil company forces the product on the consumer whether they want it or not. This seems to be the case with Windows 10, with upgrades pushed on users and support dropped from earlier versions at a much faster rate than previous Windowses. We've seen this kind of thing elsewhere, when "Don't be evil" Google made it necessary to use a Google Plus account no one wanted to use a YouTube account they did want. We didn't have to worry about this

with Amiga and related operating systems, though admittedly that's mainly because they don't have that many releases people would be paying for nowadays.

...Eric Schwartz  
From the AmiTech Gazette  
February 2016

## Mars In Just A Few Days

Ever since NASA announced plans to send a manned mission to Mars in the 2030s and Hollywood got in on the action with "The Martian," the Red Planet has loomed large in our collective imagination. Now, thanks to a video released by NASA, we can add a new bit of heat to Mars fever—the idea that we could get to the planet in just a few days.

"There are recent advances that take this from science fiction to science reality," scientist Philip Lubin says in the video, titled "Going Interstellar." "There is no known reason why we can not do this."

Lubin is a physics professor working at the University of California at Santa Barbara's Experimental Cosmology Group. Last year he and his team were awarded a proof-of-concept grant from NASA to investigate the use of photonic propulsion to power interplanetary spacecraft.

In that work, Lubin is investigating shooting Earth-orbiting lasers at wafer-thin space vessels to propel them

to greater speeds through the vacuum of space. The photons in the laser light would literally push the vessel along, much in the way the solar sail being tested plans to use photons from the sun for propulsion. This is called electromagnetic acceleration and can achieve vastly quicker speeds than chemical propulsion, such as that produced by rocket fuel.

"Electromagnetic acceleration is only limited by the speed of light while chemical systems are limited to the energy of chemical processes," Lubin writes in a paper (PDF) that lays out his road map for this type of space travel.

In the video, Lubin says we are good at achieving relativistic speeds which are speeds approaching that of light—with very small objects like subatomic particles, but that our success with accelerating things at the macro level, like rockets, is "pathetically slow." The goal, he says, is to merge the two.

He also points out that using the same amount of time (10 minutes) and chemical energy (50-100 gigawatts) it will take to get the Space Launch System (SLS) into orbit, his proposed system could propel a craft to 30 percent the speed of light—getting a 100-kilogram (about 220-pound) robotic craft to Mars in just a few days. The SLS is the world's most powerful rocket, now being developed by NASA for an eventual manned mission to Mars.

...Michael Franco  
<http://www.cnet.com/news/reaching-mars-in-a-few-days-its-possible-nasa-video-says/#ftag=CAD590a51e>

## March Calendar

March 1 — Amiga-By-The-Loop Chapter  
7:00 PM — Grand Prairie Airport  
3116 S. Great Southwest Parkway, Grand Prairie

March 1 — Board of Director's Meeting  
Approximately 9:00 PM — Location TBD

March 28 — Newsletter Deadline — 8:00 AM

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