



# MCCC News



Fort Worth

June 2017

Dallas

## Vampires and Amigas

Welcome to another wonderful monthly world of Amiga stuff. Perhaps “wonderful” is a bit much, but sometimes you have to be optimistic if you want good things to happen. In my continuing “Vampire-quest saga,” there has been a thing or two that could masquerade as progress, so I’m trying to be as optimistic as possible. After a bit of badgering, I have word that a Vampire 600 board for me should be part of the current batch for May. The downside (or possibly upside depending on your view) is that no one has asked me for any payment yet, but I remain observant and ready to raise hell if necessary. If only I hadn’t been strung along by delays and errors and unknown conspiracies so long. If I had a better idea when to expect a Vampire board, I might have taken the time to get my Amiga 600 recapped in preparation for a hopefully long and useful life.

I think about the longevity of my collection of computer hardware quite a bit nowadays, as older systems get “quirky” with age. My Amiga and G5 Morph systems are (mostly) well-behaved, while my old Mac Mini is slow with a malfunctioning video card. My not-that-old Linux laptop gained an insensitive “M” key on the keyboard, which makes typing a pain,

and my tablet is kind of a cranky old man, as four and a half is equal to mid-nineties in mobile device years. It’s slowly getting more imperative that I revamp my “regular use” hardware collection, to stay ahead of failures and my own needs. (Obsolescence is a bit more of an abstract concept for me than for many.)

The Vampire A600 would be my attempt to do so on the fully Amiga-compatible side of things. It kind of picks up the conceptual ball dropped by the Natami project years ago. I’m keeping an eye on their future. Vampire boards for A600 and A500 are available currently (in theory), with a board for the A1200 next in line. A new AROS-based Kickstart is developing alongside, with the intent of not letting a set ROM or its copyright holders hold back development. This all comes together in a stand-alone “Vampire” system, which doesn’t need to piggyback on any Amiga hardware (presumably with some Amiga chipset-alike built into the FPGA). Needless to say I’ll try to keep my eye on future developments, and might get a stand-alone system if the specs and price are right.

I’ve looked into the Amiga’s and Commodore’s shortcomings in previous articles, and in the interests of positivity, I thought this time I would talk a bit about those “good feelings” associated with the Amiga, in the senses of the general

and the nostalgic. I like to believe most of those Amiga users out there can identify with the things I write here, in some sense, especially if they have been in the game long-term. It’s easy for people to dismiss the Amiga’s achievements in these days when pretty much any cheap desktop or handheld thing can do photos, music files, and hi-def video. But if you got into Amiga early on, especially in the eighties, it was apparent how ahead of its time it was, whether it was your first computer, or you were moving up from some 8-bit system. Not a lot was available in the consumer market back then which offered full color graphics approaching photographic quality, stereo digital audio, fast animation abilities suitable for gaming or video-graphic use, and a genuine multi-tasking operating system all in a single package. It was a multimedia and desktop video system before people had any understanding of what those terms meant. It was the gold standard for gaming when the machine was programmed well. It might not have kept its performance lead as the nineties ushered the game consoles and Windows PCs to the front, but we Amiga people knew we were doing the impressive stuff long before the impressive stuff became commonplace. (It only took them a little under a decade to catch up.)

History is written by the victors, because everyone knows Nintendo invented the video game industry, not some upstart called Atari. Documentaries are happy to tell the tale of how visionaries like Bill Gates and Steve Jobs built the modern computer from the ground up. Sometimes they forget the lesser known visionaries with just as strong an impact on where we are today—people like Jack Tramiel, who had a vision of the home computer being an appliance affordable for anyone, and people like Jay Miner, who envisioned a powerful home computer with full color and quality sound in a time when limited or monochrome displays and buzzers were the order of the day.

The joy of the Amiga user came out of the machine's potential, especially once the software base began to build. Game players had their enjoyment in games superior to other available platforms (when the effort was made beyond a

simple port). Creators had it even better, with the capacity to create graphics, whether painted, digitized, or raytraced, animation in the same categories, sound and music, printed documents, programming demonstrations, games, applications, or any combination of those. With personal creation comes a feeling of accomplishment, the knowledge that you have added to the world in some tiny way. You can't get that feeling from answering your e-mail and browsing social media sites (believe me).

Some have singled out the Amiga as the computer with "soul." Many talented people poured their heart and soul and sweat and tears into creating the system, but the best part is it didn't end there, because even more talented people poured their soul into their own machines to create, and enjoy the creations of others.

...Eric Schwartz  
 From the AmiTech Gazette,  
 May 2017



## June Calendar

June 5 — MCCC Chapter Meeting  
 7:00 PM — Grand Prairie Airport  
 3116 S. Great Southwest Parkway, Grand Prairie

June 5 — Board of Director's Meeting  
 Approximately 9:00 PM — Location TBD

June 26 — Newsletter Deadline — 8:00 AM

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