



# MCCC News



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## The Amiga Consciousness

There exists a global community, a loosely knit consciousness of individuals that crosses boundaries of language and artistic disciplines. It resides in both the online and physical space, its followers are dedicated, if not fervent. The object and to some extent, philosophy that unites these adherents, is a computer system called the Commodore Amiga. So why does a machine made by a company that went bankrupt in 1994 have a cult-like following? Throughout this essay I will present to you, the reader, a study of qualitative data that has been collected at community events, social gatherings and conversations. The resulting narrative is intended to illuminate the origins of the community, how it is structured and how members participate in it. Game industry professionals, such as the person interviewed during the research for this paper, will attest to the properties, characteristics and creative application of the machine, and how this creativity plays a role in the sphere of their community. I will examine the bonds of the society, to determine if the creative lineage of the computer plays a role in community interactions.

The story of the Amiga and its maker, Commodore, is a long and complex tale. Confusing it with a Tolstoy saga could be forgiven. The purpose of this study is not to retell the origins of the Amiga computer or the demise of Commodore, but instead to look at the people that surround today's close knit global community.

Home computing was undergoing a revolution during the mid 1980's. Computing power and connectivity were on the rise while the entry cost into the hobby was dropping. The market was awash with systems that were all jockeying for pole position. One system that stood out from the rest was the Commodore Amiga, a system so unique and powerful for its time, it had Steve Jobs of Apple Computer nervous. In 1985, the Apple Mac was limited to a grayscale display, where as the Amiga had color modes that went up to 4096 colors.

Membership is informal and very few User Groups (interacting users based in a similar geographic location) exist that require registration. This differs from operations in the past. Local User Groups in the 80's and 90's typically required member dues and were operational around the world. Frequency of meetings varied from weekly to monthly. In a much more limited scope a number of these groups have either survived through the decades or reformed in new capacities, as can be seen at local meetings and their presence at yearly conferences. The observed population segment that attends meetings and conferences is typically older, averaging from mid 30's to late 50's and mostly male. With the exception of smaller User Group meetings, most events that occur are on the scale of 200-300 people and cover a wide geographic area. Conferences are quite affairs—the primary goal is to impart knowledge in a social setting. The unmistakable hum of old CRT monitors serves as ambient white noise, occasionally punctured by a computer game melody and cheerful laughter. Some machines are to be observed, from a distance. Either

they are rare and valuable or delicate and difficult to maintain. However, these machines were made to be used, and standing alongside the interactive exhibits, their owners are typically ready and more than willing to answer any questions.

The nature of the community and format of events enables individuals of all levels to participate how they see fit. Meetings and larger shows are frequented by members imparting their historical knowledge about the computer, games, demo and BBS (Bulletin Board System) scene. It's quite likely some members didn't make the conscious decision to become affiliated, instead their connection evolved out of their interest in computing, art or music. For others, collaborating with people of complimentary skills sets has produced new hardware designs that weren't thought possible 30 years ago. Active participation in forums and group discussion helps mold the direction of projects, further adding to the intellectual wealth of the community as a whole.

Software demos that are seen showcasing the capabilities of the Amiga at conferences or another type of event called "Demo Parties," are decedents from a programming and art inspired sub-culture called the "Demoscene." The Amiga can be partially attributed to the creation of this related sub-culture. Individuals with specialized talents in art, audio production and programming, who teamed together to form a group, are collectively known a Demogroup. Together, the art and effects produced push the computer to new limits. Competition between groups was, and often still is, very competitive, with one group trying to outdo another with a style of

coding technique. Today, is not uncommon at community events to find the the products of demo parties running on either original 30 year old hardware, or being emulated on a modern laptop. Programmers are often coding “close to the metal.” That is, the languages they are using, have the minimal amount of interpretation by the computer that require the program to run, they are directly accessing physical parts of the machine. The simplicity of the Amiga that enables this type of coding is an incentive to younger generations—the “style” of the machine allows them to show off their skills. Younger members are forming a solid base primarily in online forums, but also at physical demo parties. The logical conclusion is that these individuals are one way the community will continue to grow, as the older generations inevitably pass on.

Let us reference back to the primary assertion: the Amiga computer is a tool that binds creative individuals into a community. To understand that statement, we must look at how the creative empowerment, enabled by the Amiga, gave rise to careers in the game industry. When questioned with: What was your favorite platform to develop on “Back in the day?”, the response from an interviewed seasoned developer was: The Amiga home computer, a machine with a custom chipset for handling sound, video and I/O (input and output to the computer). Combined with a low price point, the Amiga was the best choice for game development with its powerful graphic capabilities.

Secondly, let us consider the response another question: When do you define the “Golden age” of video games? Answer: Probably 1987 to 1988, the C-64 was in full swing and the 16-bit machines (the Amiga) were just starting to take hold of the market. Game development teams were growing in size in terms of numbers but they were still small enough for each member to feel the contribution of their efforts.

The underlying message that can be extrapolated is creativity, an important function for this interviewee. We can juxtaposition this inferred importance against observations at User Group meetings, to assume that the glue of the community, the reason these individuals are meeting, is the creative capabilities of the machine. When we position the origins of the Amiga community—what it enabled users to do: coding, art and music, next to the observed creative output that is still being presented at meetings, the conclusion suggests the forces of attraction to the community are not only a notion of nostalgia for a games machine, but the act of creativity itself.

The achievements of the individuals that conceptualized the Amiga computer are highly recognized. Engineers that worked for Commodore, such as Dave Haynie in the 1980’s and 1990’s along with hardware developers that continue development, command enthusiastic audiences at community events throughout the year. It has been witnessed through observation at these events their willingness to meet and talk with not only small, intimate groups, but also large audiences. It could be inferred that these actions not only help preserve the legacy of their work, but they are also functioning as ambassadors for the community. Their efforts and openness introduce people to the platform who might not have been users during the machines commercial years, and help the community to thrive and expand.

Observations in the field have shown there is a specialized niche for newly produced hardware that typically enhances existing machines or replaces faulty components. Vendors and technicians present at conferences perform technical services, many of whom do it for the love of the platform, and of course, a nominal fee. Tucked away in corner locations, surrounded by machine carcasses, toolkits, soldering irons and empty caffeinated beverage cans, engineers can be found laboring on delicate

hardware. The long lines of customers imply demand for their skill is high. This observation of dedication, seen at events and in the online realm, reinforces the notion that individuals embrace their technical contribution. Their goals are not solely profit driven, and they are finding their niche in the community with this service.

Families play an important role at conventions. A large diversity of activities are available to entertain younger children that accompany parents. Finding kids glued to a monitor playing a platform game is a common sight. Introducing children not only continues the community and provides them with a glimpse of their parents’ youth, but has the added benefit of helping them understand the core concepts of computing—something which is often difficult to comprehend on modern systems.

To summarize the findings observed during community conferences, meetings, social media engagements and dialog from interviews, the catalysts for community engagement can be identified as:

- An outlet for creativity—art, music, animation.
- Intellectual challenge—programming, electrical engineering.
- Historical connection—familiarity and lengthy community interaction.
- Nostalgia—Games played in the past, introducing children to component of the parents’ youth.

With this information, would it be reasonable to speculate, the term “Amiga” not only describes a computer, but also a community who’s collaborations continue to find new ways of expressing art? It’s a vision or non-tangible quality that cannot be described by the computers physical form of silicon and ABS plastic. I would postulate that it is not an enormous stretch to draw the conclusion that the Amiga community isn’t centered around its physical attributes. Instead, the community is defined as a collective consciousness of creativi-

ty and camaraderie, who's inclusivity is not limited by an individual's own aptitude for any one creative or technical outlet.

...<http://countingvirtualsheep.com/the-amiga-consciousness/>

## The Vampire Saga

Hopefully you all have made it though March and April up to this point, whether the Easter season, or tax season, or the political season, or just seasonal weather (which apparently had no idea what the word "spring" meant this year). At least the Amiga fans got an unusual amount of news to offset the annoyances of the last couple of months.

Version 5 of MUI, the GUI toolkit for classic and PPC-based Amigas, came out recently, though it appears it may be geared to the higher-powered systems. The Apollo Accelerator group has released version 2.8 of the Apollo core for the Vampire 500 and 600 FPGA cards in March, hot on the heels of 2.7, followed by version 2.9 in April. 2.8 fixed some bugs in the FPU code and added support for the V500's expansion connector, while 2.9 focuses on ROM mapping separate from the CPU core itself, seemingly in preparation for potential application of Vampire cards to the Atari ST range of computers, and other future plans undoubtedly. More on my Vampire experiences to follow.

After no public releases for well over a year, the MorphOS team has finally released version 3.10 of their operating system, one of the largest updates to the system in a long time, both under the hood and on the surface: adding support for new hardware (though I'm still having issues with my USB scanner) and more. I couldn't give an adequate rundown of the full list of additions, so check the links earlier in the newsletter.

I've repeatedly written in these newsletter articles about the long and

winding saga of VampireQuest™. Nowadays, I have my hardware and it works nicely, but with the gift of hindsight, the quest looked more than a tiny bit like some strange, systematic years-long campaign to jerk me around. That may be a hyperbolic overreaction, but if you look over the timeline of events, you might agree.

- March 2016—I get some of my first information about the Vampire 600 V2, and e-mail the North American hardware producer, Kipper2K to declare my interest.
- April 2016—Waiting on a reply, as the hardware was hand-made at the time, leading to slow first-come-first-served production, and a long lead time before any replies.
- July 2016—No reply yet, but news that Altera FPGA chip prices are going up after the company was acquired by Intel means the price of cards will go up from the 150 Euro original price.
- August 2016—I receive word and a "declare your interest" form from Apollo, so they know I exist. I coin the term "Vampire Quest" in my newsletter articles.
- October 2016—I get word that a Vampire board is reserved for me. Pricing sets V600 boards at over \$300. (Technically still a deal for what it does.)
- November 2016—Kipper's site says first batch of boards is finished and shipping, second batch is being worked on. Production is being revamped to meet heavy demand. I hear nothing.
- December 2016—Kipper is recovering from hand surgery, with grisly online photo posted.
- March 2017—Kipper's site lists that all V600 orders have been fulfilled, but I've heard nothing. Time to start loading up Kipper's in-box.
- May 2017—I am told my V600 board will be part of this month's batch to be manufactured.
- July 2017—Finally receive a payment request, and the board is finally paid for, just in time for

cards to be sold through dealers like AmigaKit.

- August 2017—While waiting, the new V4 line of Vampire cards is announced.
- September 2017—Still waiting, and news comes out that Kipper is quitting the team, leaving my order in doubt.
- November 2017—I contact the Apollo team to inquire, am told to ask Kipper. Finally get in touch with Kipper, who tells me my order was not yet fulfilled thanks to a mix-up with a different Schwartz out of Germany. I finally receive my Vampire 600 card and show it off at the meeting—not yet installed in my Amiga 600.
- December 2017—Board is installed, after some fumbling, difficulty, and mistakes.
- March 2018—The new "Gold 2.7" core is released. When I try to install it, the system gets bricked, forcing me to buy a "USB Blaster" chip programmer to install updates from an external system. After fumbling to get things working again with help from the Prez, the new core is installed, but HDMI video is in black and white now. It was not well documented, but starting with 2.7, the Apollo team added a white list of board serial numbers into the core revisions to discourage unofficial hardware, so if you hadn't yet registered your board on their website (or the entity you ordered from didn't do it for you), you get the B&W video output. I registered as soon as I found out, but "Gold 2.8" comes out the same day. I try to install, and the system bricks again. I do the external installation, and the system is displaying in B&W, as expected.
- April 2018—"Gold 2.9" is released, thankfully. Even better, the standard installation is actually successful this time. It doesn't brick the system, and my registration was apparently accepted, as the color display is back. Before you think everything is good though, I get a new mail from the

Apollo team telling me "Great News! A Vampire 600 board has been allocated for you!" As I didn't order a new one, this was a fresh new merry mix-up, which I wrote in to correct, just in case it was something that might bite someone else's order, and not just me.

...by Eric Schwartz  
From the AmiTech Gazette,  
April 2018

## Apple Powered by Renewable Energy

April 9, 2018

Apple today announced that its global facilities, including retail stores, offices, data centers, and more, are powered with 100 percent clean energy.

Apple's 100 percent clean energy figure encompasses facilities in 43 countries, including the United States, UK, China, and India. In a statement, Apple CEO Tim Cook said Apple is "committed to leaving the world better than we found it."

"We're committed to leaving the world better than we found it. After years of hard work we're proud to have reached this significant milestone," said Tim Cook, Apple's CEO. "We're going to keep pushing the boundaries of what is possible with the materials in our products, the way we recycle them, our facilities and our work with suppliers to estab-

lish new creative and forward-looking sources of renewable energy because we know the future depends on it."

To reach its clean energy goals, Apple has invested in and constructed renewable energy facilities all around the world, such as solar arrays, wind farms, biogas fuel cells, micro-hydration generation systems, and other energy storage technologies.

Apple says it has 25 operational renewable energy projects around the world, totaling 626 megawatts of generation capacity. 286 megawatts of solar PV generation came online in 2017, which Apple says is the most ever in a single year. An additional 15 projects are under construction, and once finished, will offer a total of 1.4 gigawatts of clean renewable energy generation across 11 countries.

Some of Apple's renewable energy projects include the solar panels on the roof of Apple Park, its newest campus, 485 megawatts of wind and solar projects across China, solar facilities in Reno, Nevada and Maiden, North Carolina, more than 300 rooftop solar systems in Japan, and an 800-rooftop renewable energy system in Singapore.

Reaching 100 percent renewable energy for all Apple facilities has been a longtime goal for the company. Since 2014, 100 percent of Apple's data centers have been powered by clean energy, and since 2016, 96 percent of Apple facilities have been run on renewable energy.

In an interview with Fast Company, Apple VP of environment, policy, and social initiatives Lisa Jackson said that Apple has been working hard in recent months to ink energy deals to cover its remotest offices and retail stores in countries like Brazil, India, Israel, Mexico, and Turkey.

"If you look at our trajectory, for the last couple of years we've been close to 100%, It's just four percent more, but it's four percent done the right way. So this announcement feels like a classic Apple product release. Like our products, we sweat the details, we have pretty strict standards, and we prefer to wait and meet our standards than to rush and make a claim."

Since 2011, Apple's projects have reduced greenhouse gas emissions by 54 percent and prevented close to 2.1 million metric tons of CO2e from entering the atmosphere.

Apple has also been pushing its suppliers to use clean energy, and along with its own announcement, nine additional manufacturing powers have committed to using renewable energy sources, bringing the total number of supplier commitments to 23. New suppliers that plan to use renewable energy include Quanta Computer, Pegatron, Finisar, and more.

...by Juli Clover  
<https://www.macrumors.com/2018/04/09/apple-powered-by-renewable-energy-worldwide/>

## May Calendar

May 13 — MCCC Meeting  
2:30 PM — Grand Prairie Airport  
3116 S. Great Southwest Parkway, Grand Prairie

May 13 — Board of Director's Meeting  
Approximately 4:30 PM — Location TBD

June 3 — Newsletter Deadline — 8:00 AM

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