



MCCC News



Fort Worth

July 2018

Dallas

“Free” Software & Vampire Info

Welcome to another month, another meeting (usual time and place, check the front page if you don't know what that is.), and another mass or rambling ranting from yours truly.

This particular ramble was kicked off when I received notice that my go-to application for graphics and drawing on my tablet, Autodesk Sketchbook, was now free, as long as you set up an account with the company, “graciously” allowing me to continue using the program without an active account for a number of days before usefulness is (presumably) cut off. First off, this was a little annoying to me because I was one of those people who paid actual money to have a full working version of the program on my tablet(s), only for the ownership paradigm to be swapped out before me. I don't have much experience yet with this new “free” Sketchbook, so I can't say for certain what to expect, but I do have plenty of experience with other ostensibly free applications of various types, which is why I'm concerned about the change. Will I be able to use my graphics software freely? Will I have to endure interruptions as advertisements are put between me and my work? Will my account information guarantee additional spam and targeted marketing headed my way? Does the need for an account mean the program won't run if it can't “check in” with its

home base, thus being useless anywhere I don't have a wireless internet connection? I don't know the answers to any of these questions yet, but I'm sure I will find out soon enough, and I have my doubts I'll be happy with the answers.

It's all part of an ongoing campaign to remove the concept of user ownership from software. As an Amiga user, I remember the good old days when you owned the software you bought in a relatively unambiguous way. Part of this comes from the software usually being sold only on physical media such as floppy discs and later CD-ROM (or tapes, or ROM cartridges depending on the platform.). As the buyer/owner, you pretty much had the legal right to do whatever you wanted with it, including making personal copies and modifications, as long as you weren't distributing or reselling them and messing with the software creators' business (even though a draconian user agreement might say otherwise).

In this age of digital distribution and constant connectivity, the balance has shifted far more toward the software publishers, and the idea of buying a game or application is more akin to licensing or renting it. It's easier for them to enforce any restrictions they want to place on something when the net lets the program converse with some distant home server, and snitch that you might be using it on too many different machines, or using an unofficial (pirated) copy, or in some other way not fully sanc-

tioned by the publisher, regardless of what money you may have spent to gain access to that software in the first place. Perhaps they don't ask you for money at all, at least not a first, instead using the game or app as a vector to target advertising at your head. Perhaps they use the free stuff to hook end users, then offer further enhancements for money as the free part of the experience grows more tedious. Perhaps the publisher eventually decides to stop supporting that particular piece of software, or anything at all because they went out of business themselves, and suddenly your app doesn't work because it's looking for some home server that isn't there any more. Perhaps I don't really need to worry about those things with my Sketchbook program, but historically, switching from “thing you bought” to “free thing if you have an account with us” rarely comes without strings.

As I am the resident club member with a Vampire accelerator for my Amiga, I was asked to relay some information regarding the current availability of Vampire hardware. This was not quite as simple as I was hoping, but here is some of info on the current state of the Vampire Amiga hardware family.

Currently available hardware:

- Vampire 600 V2
Card plugs on over Amiga 600 surface-mount 68000 chip. Offers HDMI video output for enhanced graphic modes, 128 Mb

RAM, and storage via micro-SD card slot.

- Vampire 500 V2+ Card plugs into 68000 chip socket on Amiga 500 (and has successfully been used on other models with the same socket, such as A2000 series or A1000). Offers the features of the V600, and adds an IDE interface and a “user port,” which allows extra interface hardware to be added, such as network or USB.

Planned upcoming hardware:

- Vampire V4 series Uses newer Cyclone 5 FPGA chip for greater speed and capabilities than V2 series (presumably), 512 Mb DDR3 RAM, fastIDE, digital video out, MicroSD, dual kickstart flashROMs, and a modular design philosophy for easier adapting to different systems.

Versions of the hardware are planned for the Amiga 500/1000/2000/CDTV, Amiga 600 (adapter for the A500 board), Amiga 1200, and a stand alone version which requires no Amiga hardware for plugs/interfaces/power.

Current availability:

Stock fluctuates, but as of this writing:

- www.amedia-computer.com (France) V500 V2+, V600 V2,

each @ 379 Euro. V600 in stock as of this writing.

- Amigastore.eu (Spain) V500 V2+ listed @ 370 Euro, not currently in stock.
- www.relec.ch V500 V2+ @ 390 Swiss Francs, V600 V2 @ 300 Francs, low stocks.
- Amigakit.amiga.store (UK) Listed as a reseller, but Vampire boards not found on the site currently.

For more up-to-date information, visit the www.apollo-core.com site. Also, you can visit the sister site www.apollo-accelerators.com, where you can put in your contact info, and receive word and payment request once hardware is available (usually via PayPal). Currently only the V500 V2+ is listed as available on the site, at the price of 300 Euro.

Based on my brief amount of research, there are still hoops to jump through if you want to lay your hands on a new Vampire card, but the overall convenience and number of available purchasing options is far greater than when I tried to do so over two years ago. Good luck to anyone who might want to make the attempt in the future.

...Eric W. Schwartz
From the AmiTech Gazette,
June 2018

Worthy

Just because a system becomes obsolete for most of us doesn't mean that everyone stops working with them. Take a look at this brand new game for the Amiga 500 called Worthy, which is sure to make most of us regret ever upgrading our home computers, despite the improvements made since 1987.

The group who developed the game is known as Pixelglass and they have done a lot of work on this platform, releasing several games over the past few years. Their latest is Worthy, an action-adventure game that looks similar to the top-down perspective Zelda games from the SNES. It's an impressive piece of work for a system that few of us own anymore, but if you have one (or even if you have a good emulator) you might want to give it a whirl.



...<https://hackaday.com/2018/06/21/the-best-new-amiga-title-of-2018/>

July Calendar

July 8 — MCCC Meeting
2:30 PM — Grand Prairie Airport
3116 S. Great Southwest Parkway, Grand Prairie

July 8 — Board of Director's Meeting
Approximately 4:30 PM — Location TBD

August 1 — Newsletter Deadline — 8:00 AM

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