The MCCC News

The Metroplex Commodore Computer Club

Serving Dallas/Fort Worth Since 1983

March 2021

The Vampire V4 Stand-Alone System - Part 4

Welcome to a new month where hopefully we, as American humans shall attempt to prove we are capable of having nice things without bad-mouthing them, knocking them over, stepping on them, and peeing on the rubble. We did a pretty poor job through most of last year, though admittedly we didn't have a lot to work with either. This year's had a pretty rough start too, but at least it's looking like there's a light at the end of the tunnel now, assuming it's not actually an oncoming train.

The good side is that the world of Amiga and its related stuff has kept rolling along regardless. There are a few interesting upcoming developments. I don't have a lot of specifics (perhaps our Prez will have more detail on some) at the moment for those behind them, or how soon they will be coming, so I'll label them as rumor for the moment. One is a drop-in replacement motherboard to fit in the case of the original Amiga 1000 model. The board offers a 68020 CPU, sockets for the OCS/ECS chips, and expansion connectors in both A1000 and A1200 style, which would imply a Vampire V1200 could be added as well. If someone is interested in getting new life out of an A1000 (or at least the case.) This might be worth looking into.

Another hardware maker looks to be trying to beat the Apollo team Vampire at its own game by making Amiga 500/100/2000 accelerator boards built around an ARM CPU. I don't know exactly how this will be implemented yet, but if some sort of hardware or software layer is part of it to make the ARM emulating the 680x0 appear as native hardware to the Amiga, the result could be very impressive, and potentially inexpensive too.

In a similar vein, there are projects to use a Raspberry Pi board as an expansion card for Amiga systems. Again I don't know the exact application, but there's certainly plenty of potential, from CPU accelerator to video card, or just emulating all the functions of the host Amiga. More info will be forthcoming as I get the motivation to find out more.

Back to my exploits with the Vampire V4 system. There have been a couple updates since my last writing. There was a new V5 release of the FPGA hardware core, which improved some aspects of classic hardware compatibility. Along with that, there have been corresponding updates to the major "OS distros," the AROS-based Apollo OS, and the Amiga OS 3.9-based Coffin release 58. Apollo is quite easy to obtain from the Apollo team's website, while Coffin is more a matter of searching around and hoping to find a valid torrent link. This is apparently thanks to its unlicensed use of the Amiga OS, along with a myriad of other software, most of which could be written off as "abandonware," but is probably equally unauthorized. Even so, it is one of the more complete and easy to use distributions of Amiga OS and software for the V4, and much simpler than trying to roll your own OS onto a compact flash card.

I haven't done a lot of tweaking and experimenting yet, but I have put in a little work. I still recommend a scan converter of some description between the V4 and LCD monitor, especially if you plan to use games or any other software which is likely to need use of an NTSC or PAL screen mode. The latest core update allows running 24 bit screens at 1280x720 resolution (720P), though at 50hz for silly European hardware maker reasons. Regardless, you can get a pretty nice display for your workbench screen or other software with this mode.

One of my benchmarks for Vampire V4 testing has been my favorite Amiga game, "Worms: The Director's Cut," specifically with my user-added landscape graphics and sound effects included. In previous core revisions, the game could run, but the control panel where you select weapons and the like did not appear. It was technically possible to still play it, if you fumble around in the black area where the controls go. With the new V5 core update, I'm happy to report the control panel is visible now. That's not the only issue, however. I've noticed when I run the game on Apollo OS, (now or previously) the keyboard does not work, which makes the game largely unplayable. I can only assume the AROS-based OS handles the keyboard somewhat differently, which is not compatible with how the Worms game polls the hardware. Running Worms DC atop Coffin, on the other hand, the keyboard DOES work as intended, and the game runs pretty much as it would on a real AGA Amiga system. I have seen a graphical glitch here or there, but it looks like that may have more to do with unintended interactions from other software than the game itself. More research is called for, it seems.

As it stands currently, I would recommend the Coffin R58 OS distro, if you

can get it. It offers the best balance of power, included software, and compatibility on the V4 for now. That's not to say that Apollo OS is a bad choice either, and may well be preferable to those who plan to use productivity software more than games or demos (though it is more than capable of it, the compatibility at an OS level is slightly less.), or prefer using software like Directory Opus 5 in place of the standard Amiga Workbench. It's a matter of preference more than anything, and I have mine for the time being.

Until next time, I'll see you all sooner or later.

…Eric Schwartz
From the AmiTech Gazette
Dayton, Ohio, February 2021

YouTube Links

Guru Meditation - Ultimate Raspberry in A1200 case
https://youtu.be/HdXxJ-mrxHM

Modern Vintage Gamer: Pimping the A600 in 2021
https://youtu.be/fECbYweDTjA

Retro Recipes - Talking to the ISS using a C64
https://youtu.be/WJVU1stPPlQ

…from Eric Schwartz
From the AmiTech Gazette
Dayton, Ohio, February 2021

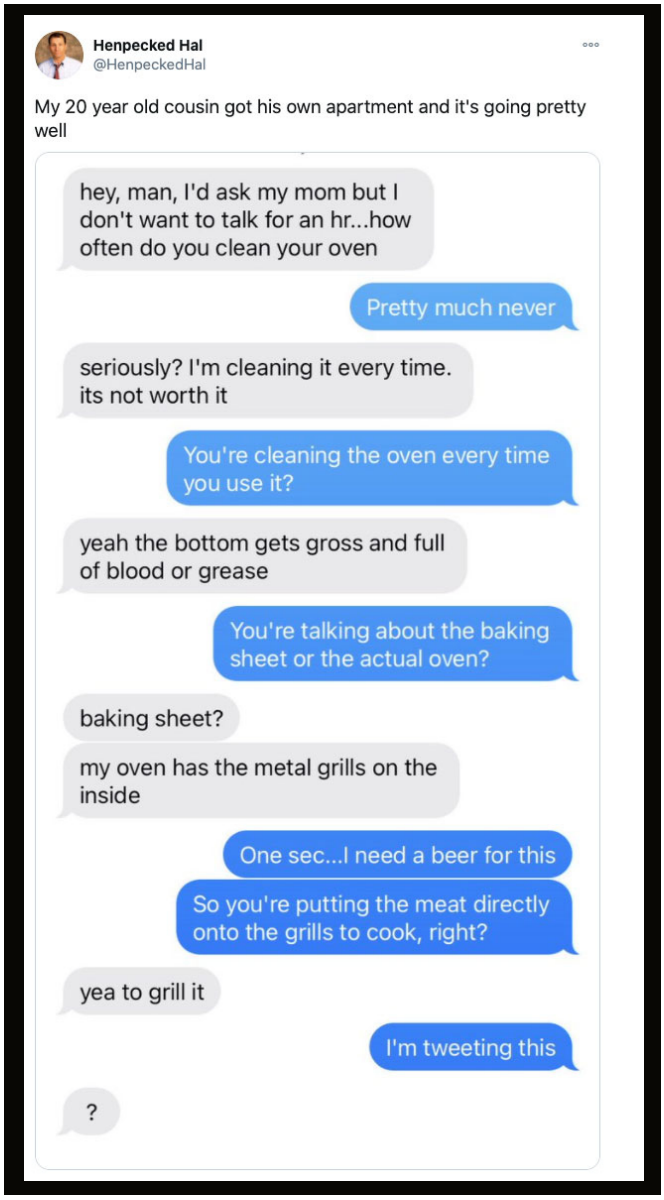
A Solar Panel in Space

A solar panel in space is collecting energy that could one day be beamed to anywhere on Earth.

https://www.cnn.com/2021/02/23/americas/space-solar-energy-pentagon-science-scn-intl/index.html

February Meeting Livestream

https://youtu.be/9hi9xYX1pHI



March 13 Meeting — Dallas Makerspace
1825 Monetary Ln. Carrolton, Texas 75006

MCCC 2709 Wolff Drive Arlington, Texas 76015
http://www.amigamccc.org