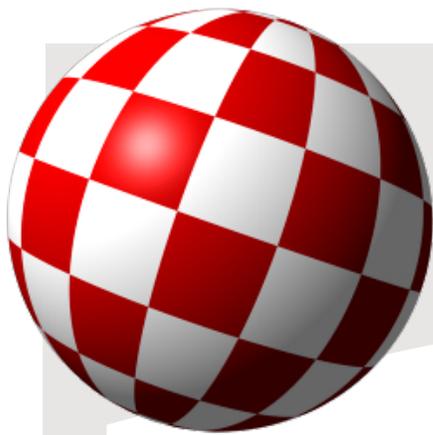


The MCCC News

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September 2021

The A500 Mini

Welcome to another month in our repeating time loop, where everything starts getting better, until it gets worse. I did a little checking on the status of the library, and discovered that, starting in August, masks would be required in Dayton libraries, regardless of vaccination status, so the Prez and I decided to keep the meetings home-bound for a little bit longer. Therefore, the August meeting will be held at Prez Mike Barclay's place still until further notice. I hope you will be able to make it. Sometimes the Prez and I feel we're only in this on our own at times.

There's perhaps a bit more news that usual lately. On the less high-profile side of things an "HD remake" of the Amiga-originated Sonic-esque platform game "Zool" has been announced for the Steam online game store. From what I've seen, the graphics themselves aren't massively updated from the Amiga or console versions, save for using a wide screen format now, which gives a larger view of the playfield and less chance of running into danger before you can react to it. The reaction from anyone who isn't an Amiga fan seems to be "ummm... Okay?"

Still, there has been a trend over the last several years of producing 'HD' updates and remakes of games which, while not Amiga-exclusive, were created on the Amiga or more popular on the Amiga than on other platforms. These updates included

"Superfrog", "Flashback", "Shadow of the Beast", "Gods", and more. These seem to be done as a relatively easy money-maker, as many of these games don't have to be designed or built from the ground up, just ported over, the visuals juiced up here and there, and sold as an easy Steam download for a quick buck. Can't say I blame them — I'd probably do the same if I could.

The big news of recent weeks is the announcement of the "A500 Mini" from Retro Games, makers of "The 64" mini and full size systems — a move which everyone expected while simultaneously not knowing if it would ever actually happen. With a release set for sometime in early 2022, like the 64 before it, the "A500" has no official Commodore or Amiga logos or branding, despite looking like a miniature Amiga 500 system. Also like the 64mini, the A500 mini's keyboard is only for show, and any actual keyboard function is handled via an on-screen keyboard or external USB keyboard (not included). What is included is a classic 2-button 'tank'



mouse and a game pad inspired by the one that came with the CD32, (but not identical) which connect by USB. Could be interesting to see how useful these devices are on your PCs or

Amiga/MorphOS systems with USB.

Not surprisingly, the A500 Mini is emulation-based, presumably using some kind of ARM-CPU-based hardware, which enables it to run AGA games as well as classic OCS/ECS. The firmware is upgradeable, so maybe CD games will be a possibility in the future. 25 games are advertised though only twelve are listed on the website as of this writing. I guess not all the licenses have been nailed down yet, but the ones listed so far are some of the better or well-known ones. I hope I'm wrong, but I wouldn't count on Psygnosis titles being officially included, as their properties belong to Sony now.

Fortunately it's possible to add more games to the system via USB flash drive. It seems the preferred form is the WHDLoad install, as opposed to ADF disk images or the like. Normally, games are accessed through an on screen menu, but the Amiga workbench may be accessible too, though it's unknown exactly how useful it will be beyond simple exploration. It puts out a 720P display, with various options for aspect ratio and simulated scan-lines. The ability to save your place in any game and rewind your play is a special feature not possible on real Amiga hardware. I doubt it offers much you couldn't get on a sufficiently powerful Raspberry Pi system running an emulator, but it is an interesting package.

The big question being asked by most after the announcement is "is it worth it?" The price is listed at roughly £119, which is up to \$165 in a direct exchange rate. That's not a terrible price, but puts it a step or two above 'impulse buy' territory for most. The problem I see is, for the 'casuals' out there, it looks very expen-

sive compared to the likes of other mini-consoles from Nintendo or Sega, which are closer to the \$50–\$75 range. With the ability to add games from an external source and hypothetical usefulness beyond only games, it's more versatile than most mini-consoles on the market, but anyone who is not already a hard-core Amiga fan will probably only see the price tag and the selection of included games. The hard-core enthusiasts might prefer a more versatile, maybe less pricey option of a Raspberry PI 3 or 4 with an Amiga emulator, but at least this shouldn't require a lot of trouble shooting and setup. Perhaps the big draw is the mini-replica A500 case connected to it all, and I wouldn't be all the surprised if someone bought one and attempted to stuff it with different innards, like a RasPi or Vampire board.

Personally, I don't know if this A500 mini offers enough for the hardcore enthusiast, and the price tag is likely too high for wider market appeal. I'll have to decide if it's worth it to me. I might go for it to support the product, and potential updates or upgrades to come. It comes with "Worms: The Director's Cut", greatest Amiga game of all time, possibly all platforms, so that's a pretty good start. If you ask me though, for 120 pounds, there should have been a basic USB keyboard included in the box.

(Retro Games A500 Mini Website:)
<https://retrogames.biz/thea500-mini>

Also:
The Great Commodore Brand Heist
(Nostalgia Nerd)
<https://youtu.be/UOXaD-7FYOg>

...by Eric Schwartz,
From the AmiTech Gazette
Dayton, Ohio, August 2021

Aluminum-Ion Battery

Faster charging plus greatly increased safety.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/michaeltaylor/2021/05/13/ev-range-breakthrough-as-new-aluminum-ion-battery-charges-60-times-faster-than-lithium-ion/>

A Quiet Supersonic Aircraft

With the X-59, NASA and Lockheed Martin want to do the seemingly impossible — build a jet that flies faster than the speed of sound, without the explosive boom.

<https://www.cnet.com/news/nasa-lockheed-martin-x-59-the-quiet-supersonic-airplane-that-could-let-you-fly-faster-than-ever/>



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