

AMIGA news

Vol. 1, No. 6

JUNE 1992



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IS THE AMIGA DOOMED?

by Graham Heywood

LONG ago and far away, a chairman of some company or other, that held its Annual General Meeting offshore, bemoaned the lack of U.S. sales, and asked for ideas. Many people put forward suggestions, some good, some bad, but one thing was common to all - they were ignored. It appears that spreading the good word has fallen upon the shoulders of Amigadom in general, and it appears we are expected to go door-to-door, converting the heathen masses.

This is all well and good, but what happens in the meantime? I am seeing a lot of players in the Amiga marketplace going away. I also see a lot of dealers closing their doors. The Amiga (in the U.S., at least) is sick. It's not yet in intensive care, but it is heading that way and that is sad, because Amigadom boasts some of the most creative people in the world. It's time to do something.

What can we do? The answer, as I (read *Amiga News*) see it, is a national advertising campaign.

"Ah!" you say, "an old idea. Commodore won't spend the money." WRONG! Commodore has a "cooperative advertising" policy. So I propose getting them to spend some advertising dollars by holding a competition. NOT one of those self-serving competitions that *AmigaWorld* holds, where the prizes are equipment that manufacturers have donated to get free publicity for their product (and *AmigaWorld* gets to keep the entries and then sell them to anyone willing to ante up \$20 or so); but

Continued on page 19



LIFE AND DEATH IN SIMANT, SEE PAGE 19

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SATISFIED MIGRAPH CUSTOMER

I found the December 1991 issue of *Amiga News* on the shelf of our local Amiga dealer. I was impressed with the review of Gold Disk's *Video Director* and have subsequently purchased it.

You were correct in directing William Moeus to look at Migraph's Scanner and *Touch-Up*. I recently purchased it and their OCR software. Migraph was very conscientious in filling my order. Shipment was delayed slightly so that they could send us the very latest version of *Touch-Up*. I especially appreciated that, since twice in the past four weeks, I purchased from other companies software on which major upgrades were in process. I was not informed of this and have had to pay extra for upgrades immediately after purchase due to major changes in the software.

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Get all the magic out of your Amiga.

Super BBS Operates in the Shadow of the Mountains

By Cory Smith

Amiga News recently went walkabout in the USA, and, as a result, we discovered many wonderful people and ideas in Utah. But Utah is not the only place where Amiga action is hot and heavy. Deep in blue grass country, at the gateway to Smoky Mountains National Park, lies Knoxville, Tennessee, recent location of a World's Fair, and home to Other World BBS- the coolest, acc number one on-line service in America's heartland.

Other World BBS (formerly Data Bank Service, a decidedly more mundane name if you ask me) was established in October, 1990 on an Amiga 2000 system in a Bomac Tower equipped with a GVP 68030/28mhz accelerator, 9 megabytes of ram and an 80 megabyte hard drive supporting close to 3000 files. That's a hard, fast and deep way to begin a BBS!

From the beginning, Other World has been running CNET BBS software and is currently employing CNET version 2.1G. This powerful program, in conjunction with AmigaDOS 2.04 allows Sysop Joe Passmore (on-line code name "Wildcat") to encode all the typical functions of a BBS with an ease and efficiency less apparent than with other BBS software designs. Within CNET, Joe has found the means to maintain a wide selection of on-line games, a large message base and extensive file handling capabilities, all built in and with new features being added every update. This ease of operation is essential to a Sysop like Joe, who must bal-

ance a full-time job with free-time BBS maintenance.

In the past two years, the system has expanded from one to three phone lines. Two of these employ Supra 2400 Plus modems and one employs the US Robotics V.42 HST (19,200 plus) using a multi-serial card. This ability to simultaneously handle more than one caller and at different speeds, eases some of the congestion that normally arises with a BBS known for its excellence.

The evolved (current) system includes thousands of doc files, Amiga Fred Fish Collection, an active fantasy adventure, message base and multiple on-line newspapers, (newest addition, *Amiga News*, coming soon). With the addition of five CD ROM drives (four in an external multi-user case) and a total of over one gigabyte of hard drive space, 39,000 or so PC compatible public domain and shareware files are now available. Couple that to 100,000 plus so Amiga PD and shareware programs which have also been added, and now a total of more than four gigabytes of information is available on-line. That's probably enough storage and access capacity to run a manned Mars mission (or maybe not). Imagine keeping all this stuff cool. Well, eight fans and two 200 watt power supplies certainly contribute toward that end.

Presently, Other World BBS is user supported. Voluntary contributions by the users are typically twenty five dollars and that generous donation guarantees an hour and a half usage time daily on any of the

three BBS lines. All others are limited to one half hour per day unless extra time is gained through other means. Non-donors can procure credit through constructive comments in the message base, uploading new public domain or shareware software and data files ranging from music to beautiful pictures. This is a great idea. It subsidizes creativity and rewards participation in the ideals of the service.

The main goals of Other World BBS are to sustain its phenomenal growth curve, to continue to support users of all types of computers without prejudice (a lesson some Amiga boards have yet to learn), and to upwardly customize the environment to better serve all users. Joe actively solicits not only regular users but any user at all, for ideas and suggestions that will allow him to improve the quality of the service. To this end, he has continued to split access between donors and non-donors, realizing the importance of each group and trying hard to accommodate each in turn. It is rare that access is denied, even though the user base continues to expand nationally, and internationally, including Germany and even the land of the crocodile and the kangaroo, Australia.

Members and visitors to the system, when asked for comments, sing its praises. While it is "Big" they've said, it is also "responsive to its users."

One might ask, why do all this? It's simple. Joe originally established the BBS in order to offer an alternative source for software other than commercial or pirated (the two being often one and the same). In

fact, the primary intent was to combat piracy. Joe holds strong opinions on the subject. He believes that software piracy damages the software market in general and specifically the Amiga market where it is sometimes blatant. He is of the opinion that offering games commercially for the Amiga is an exercise in futility and is quite vocal about it at times.

"A pirate copy (of a game) can usually be had within weeks of release," Joe says. "Many of these people, upon copying pirated software, promise themselves that if they like it they will buy it. Rarely, if ever do they go back and buy an original."

Joe points to the use of demos by some vendors as a means of supporting non-pirates. He believes that this works and encourages more vendors to try this method, perhaps distributing the demos through respected BBSs like Other World. But realistically, he knows that communications between user and vendor in the Amiga community is tenuous at best. Ever the optimist, though, he hopes for improvement.

Future plans for Other World, currently on the drawing board and awaiting user comment, include an on-line shopping center for hardware and software supplies oriented toward both Amiga and PC, more chat-type real-time discussion groups and possible theme orientation adjustment - plus anything else that will help make the service better, better...and ultimately, best in the nation. Joe Passmore and friends are certainly not without enthusiasm.

In the final analysis, this BBS nestled in the mountains of Tennessee is about dedication. With so many on-line services in the non-pro category concentrating on nothing more than the selfish acquisition of countless volumes of software, Other World system has a heartbeat, a live-and-let-live attitude toward non-Amiga users, and a singularity of purpose. The concept of offering keyboard to front door shopping is just one of the innovative ideas being discussed as Joe Passmore and friends prepare to propel Other World into the 21st century in style. To maintain the standard of excellence already established will allow them, as well as the new user, to enjoy good old fashioned southern hospitality and just plain have a good time.

I know that's why I bought my computer. □

Other World BBS Numbers

Supra 2400 Plus Line (615) 428-5883
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About the author:

Cory Smith is 25 years old and Co-Sysop of Other World BBS. He loves comics, science fiction, fantasy, and Computers

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Extreme Violence [#253] MEGA disk featuring *Extreme Violence* (extremely bloody and fun AMOS game for two), *Xenon III* (SEUCK game), *Husker Du* (good Tetris game), *Cabes* (3D Tetris). Highly recommended! 1 disk.

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Vivian's

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British "Top Gun" Joins Commodore USA

NEW MARKETING STRATEGIES ON THE HORIZON?

Over the years CBM has taken a lot of flak for its marketing policy (or lack of one). It seems that at last constructive steps have been taken. The first move was made on May 26th with Commodore Business Machines, Inc. President James Dionne announcing the appointment of David J. Pleasance as vice president of Consumer Sales. Pleasance will be responsible for the sale and marketing of Commodore's consumer products throughout the United States.

Pleasance has been with Commodore for nine years, and was most recently general manager of Commodore Electronics Limited, headquartered in Switzerland. CEL oversees operations in twenty-seven countries throughout the world where Commodore does not have a subsidiary. Countries include Finland, Greece, Turkey, the Eastern Bloc and the Middle East.

Pleasance joined Commodore's U.K. subsidiary in 1983 as a Business Development Manager. Over the next three years he held several sales positions and was named Sales Director of their Retail Products Group in 1986. In this position he was responsible for management of the sales team and for maintaining relations with

major entertainment software publishers. One measure of the success of his efforts can be seen in the substantial growth of U.K. business between 1986 and 1990. Commodore now holds a commanding position in the U.K. consumer computing market.

"David is an outstanding addition to Commodore's U.S. management team," said Dionne. "His depth of knowledge of Commodore's product line and history of success will serve us well in the challenges and opportunities we face with the consumer marketplace." Dionne added.

Pleasance has already announced an extension to the CommodoreExpress customer service program, making it easier for consumers to have their machine repaired or replaced if defective.

Merisel Agreement

The second move which may have far-reaching effects is the signing of a Sole National Distribution Agreement with Merisel, Inc. enabling Merisel to distribute Commodore's entire product line to U.S. resellers. This move marks Commodore's first entrance into the national PC distribution channel.

"Multimedia is emerging as one of the

fastest growing and most profitable product categories among resellers today," said Merisel Vice President of Strategic Product Planning Linda Kroog. "Commodore represents a strategic addition to our multimedia products offering. We will support all its products and its entrance into this channel through the dedicated marketing resources we've put behind our systems and multimedia strategies for 1992."

"Partnering with Merisel provides us with a strong distribution arm in the U.S. and will give us added reach in marketing Amiga and CDTV product families," said Commodore President James Dionne.

"Commodore's and Merisel's worldwide strategies are closely aligned," said Merisel CEO Mike Pickett. "Both companies are very strong in international markets and a large portion of each company's business comes from overseas sales. Now that we've formed a strong partnership and business plan in the U.S. we look forward to expanding the scope of our relationship to include other international markets as time goes on." □

Pump up the Volume!

Turn your Amiga into a beat box. *BoomBox* is an interactive music program that puts you in control of the baddest, freshest Rap grooves this side of Hammer. *BoomBox* features a totally interactive Remix screen to add echo and effects to the existing song files, or to your own arrangements.

Published by Dr. T's Music Software, *BoomBox* runs on all Commodore Amiga computers, and does not require MIDI.

Contact: Steve Thomas, Dr. T's Music Software, 100 Crescent Road, Needham, MA 02194. Telephone (617) 455-1454 ext. 226. Fax (617) 455-1460. □

Electronic Messaging Conference

The Electronic Mail Association presents *Electronic Messaging '92: Golden Opportunities*, October 26 - 28, 1992 in San Francisco, CA. For more information, contact EMA, 1555 Wilson Boulevard, Suite 300, Arlington, VA 22209-2405. (703) 875-8620. □

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Resumes acknowledged
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New Horizons Software Includes File Conversion Program and extra Fonts with ProWrite

To alleviate the problems that have arisen when other Amiga word processors have been abandoned, or when users upgrade to more advanced word processing with *ProWrite*, New Horizons has greatly enhanced their *ProWriteFileConvert* program, a program which can convert a number of other Amiga word processor documents into *ProWrite's* format. The program will be included with the current version of *ProWrite*, as well as be made available through New Horizons' online support area in CompuServe.

ProWrite File Convert allows users of

ProWrite to bring documents they've created with other Amiga word processors into *ProWrite*, while retaining as much of the original document's formatting as possible.

This new release of *ProWrite File Convert* can convert all of the following formats: *BeckerText*, *excellence!*, *FinalCopy*, *Kind Words*, *Pen Pal*, *Scribble!*, *Textcraft*, *Textcraft Plus*, *TextPro*, *WordPerfect* and *RTF* (Microsoft Word interchange format.)

Also included with *ProWrite* are two typeface collections from New Horizons' *ProFonts I* font package.

ProWrite features include a 100,000 word spell checker, a thesaurus with over 300,000 cross references, multiple columns with snaking or side-by-side text, macros, an AREXX port, mail merge, PostScript printing, color graphics support, text wrap around graphics and more.

ProWrite requires Kickstart 1.2 or later, one megabyte of memory, and two disk drives. Suggested retail price: \$175.

New Horizons Software, Inc., 206 Wild Basin Road, Suite 109, Austin, TX 78746. (512)328-6650.

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A-3000 POWER UPGRADE

Micro R&D has announced a power supply upgrade program for the Amiga 3000. For \$149.00, you can replace the A-3000 135 watt circuit board with their rugged 200 watt powerhouse. The Micro R&D upgrade gives the A-3000 owner the opportunity to install the Video Toaster, time base correctors, accelerators and other power-draining devices that tend to overburden other lighter-weight power supplies.

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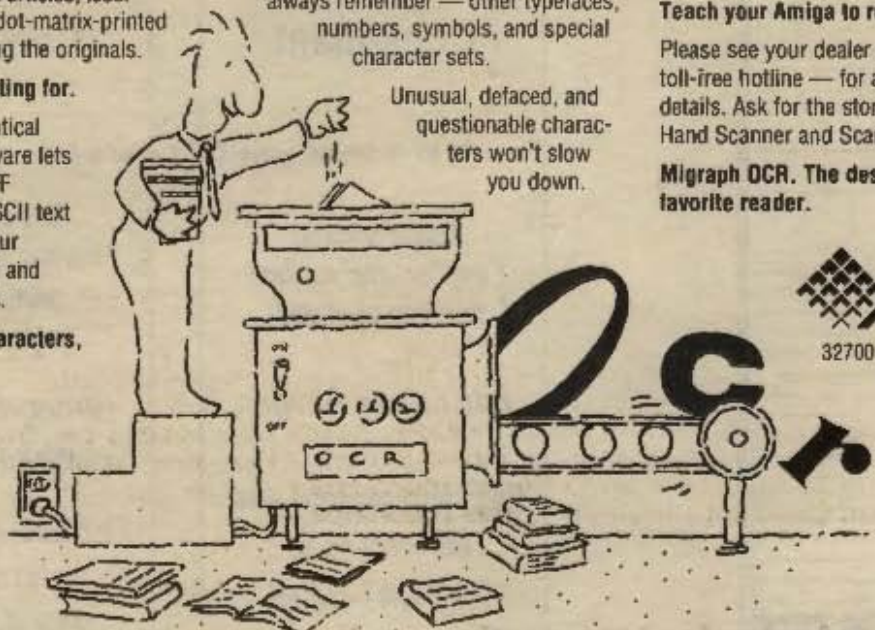
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Dear Editor,
I would like information on how to join the Amiga Zone SIG. Who do I write to and where?

Terrance Thompson
Detroit MI

- The Amiga Zone SIG is on Portal, if you live within an area with SprintNet access, Portal is probably the best deal for Amiga users, with a flat fee of \$13.95 per month (plus \$2.50 per hr. SprintNet charge, or \$30 for 30 hours). Portals information number is (408) 973-9111. The other major players in online services, together with information numbers, are CompuServe 800-848-8199, Bix 800-227-2983, and Genie 800-638-9636.

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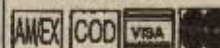
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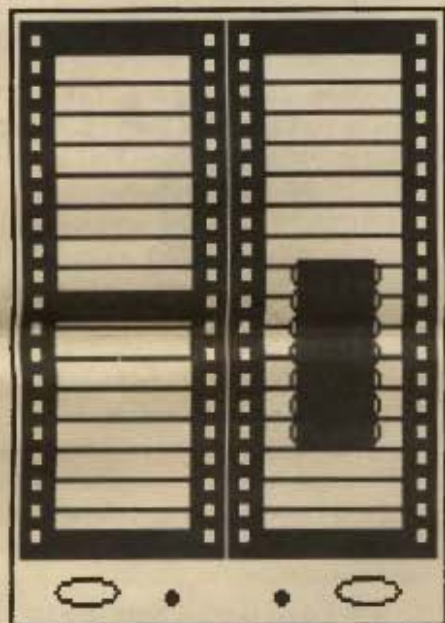
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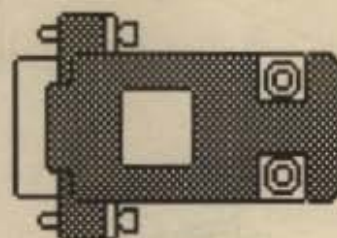
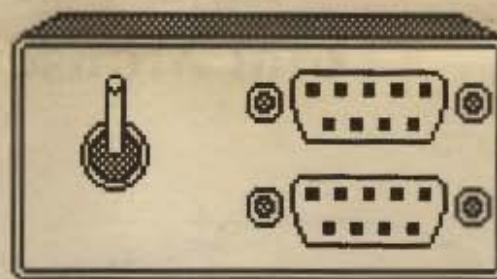
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- A1000 - Air Drive Internal (Amiga 1000 CPU replacement drive, includes comprehensive installation manual)
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Amiga Trade Shows

by Jason R. Chin

Amiga News attended the recent World of Amiga trade show in New York, and met many swell people from all parts of Amigadom while we were there. Micro-PACE was represented (as it always is) by friendly and congenial people, who were enthusiastically pro-Amiga in their conversation. We noticed, however, that Micro-PACE did not demonstrate or sell any product, even though it was a selling show. So we asked Jason Chin, who wears many hats at Micro-PACE (one of which is Show Coor-

dinator) what shows he's attended and why Micro-PACE doesn't offer things for sale at them:

Trade shows are typically places where representatives of various strata of any given industry meet, display their wares and generally show off. Technical jargon, product literature and false compliments are thrown about like so much mud during a Presidential campaign. There are even trade shows about trade shows; where companies that specialize in organizing and

selling show material meet and greet.

There are two types of Amiga shows. Ami-Expo is run by Computer Performance, Inc., while the World Of Commodore/Amiga (W.O.C./A) is run by the Ramige Management Group. The Ami-Expos are not officially sanctioned by Commodore, while the W.O.C./As are supported and sometimes co-sponsored by Commodore. Since both organizations strive to have two shows a year, this means a total of four Amiga shows throughout the

country during one year. Some believe this is too much, while others wish there were more. In the long run, many manufacturers will end up only attending (booth-wise, that is) one or two shows a year due to financial and scheduling considerations.

The most recent Ami-Expo was held on board the de-commissioned, but no less beautiful, Queen Mary. While one may not have appreciated the setting just by visiting the show floor(s), it was certainly inspiring to see Perry Kivolowitz and other Amiga dignitaries speak in the very room where Winston Churchill once spoke. Noticeably missing were the "big three" Commodore, NewTek and GVP. Despite torrential rains, however, a surprisingly large amount of Amiga users and dealers showed up.

CPI is also in the midst of establishing the first Desktop Video show. This show is not exclusively devoted to the Amiga, but will cater to all platforms involved with desktop video and this is where the Amiga will shine. When a company or user sees and learns what an Amiga, Mac, or IBM can do with video for the same price, the Amiga will win hands down.

The World of Commodore/Amiga shows are sanctioned by Commodore and supported by way of impressive, expansive booths by CBM. The World of Commodore/Amiga show in New York is usually held at the New York Passenger Ship Terminal. Lectures and large demonstrations are held just yards away from the main show floor, which is extremely convenient (especially if the weather is a little warm). At the most recent W.O.C./A (last April), GVP took the opportunity to display several new products, as well as their gorgeous (i.e., expensive!) new booth. ASDG and Amazing Computers Publishing displayed an Amiga-controlled train set which garnered quite a bit of interest and speculation.

The CATS (Commodore Applications and Technical Support) team and the W.O.C./A sponsored a meeting with developers and distributors wherein international distribution could be discussed. Distributors and developers from around the world attended. The meeting was a great success, with agreements and meetings springing forth as a result. The Amiga community could be seeing the fruits of such combinations within a year or so.

If you've read thus far, you've probably realized that I've been to several Amiga shows for Micro-PACE. We usually have a booth, but we do not demonstrate or sell any products. Why do we go to Amiga shows, then? Micro-PACE likes to take an active role in the Amiga community. We're not just a warehouse with a "box-moving" mentality. We care about and for the Amiga industry. We channel resources toward the support of these shows to better communicate with our dealers and manufacturers. In this era of voice-mail salesmanship, we find that talking to an actual person and shaking their hand goes a long way. See you at the next show!

Jason Chin is Show Coordinator for Micro-PACE Distributors.

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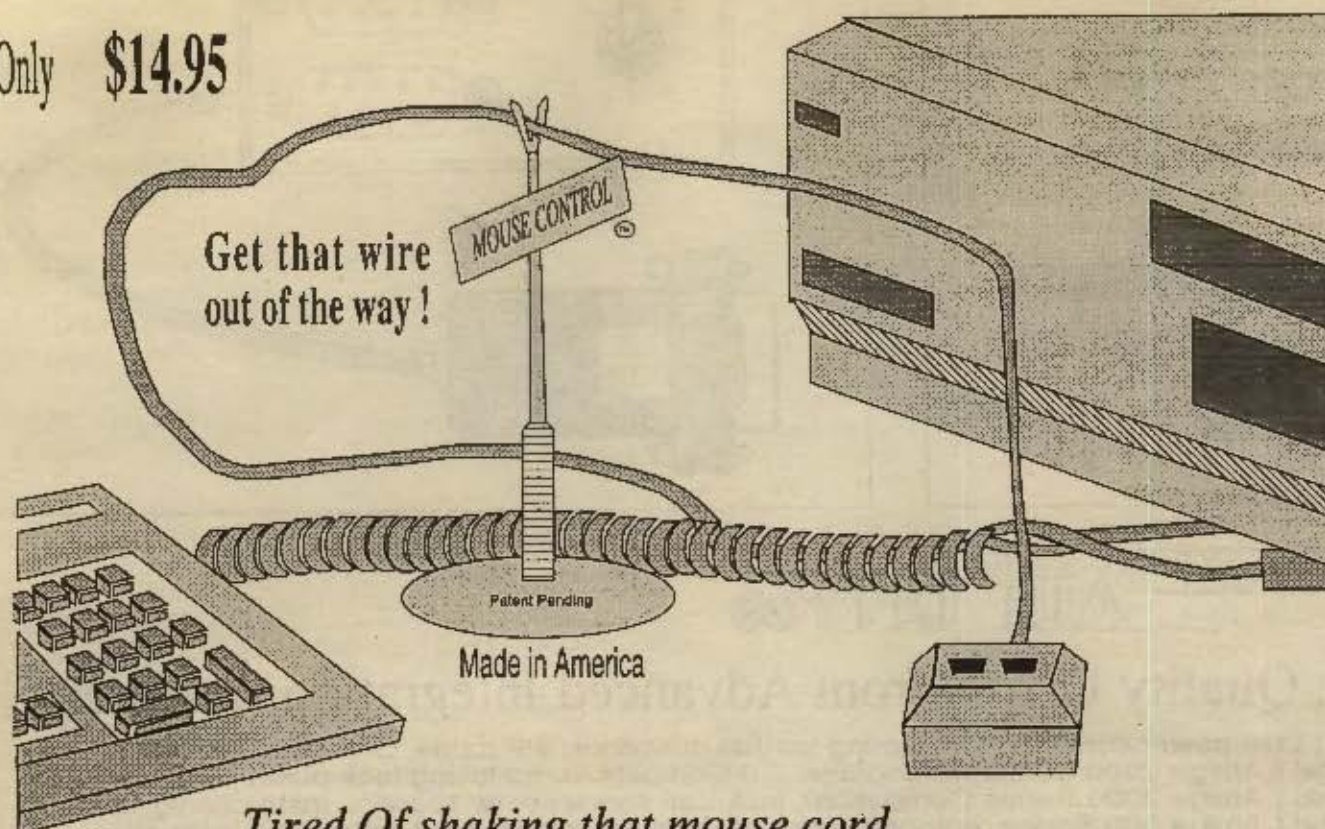
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Graham's RAMblings

Some of the most persistent rumors in Amigadom are of the "new machine" variety. It seems that a lot of the people I've spoken to lately all have some information about a new "killer" machine. These rumors come in a variety of flavors; everything from a new A5000 based on the

68050 with a zillion MBs of RAM, to an updated A500. Well, the updated A500 does exist. It's designated the A600 and is on sale in Europe (although I doubt if we will see it on this side of the pond anytime soon). The machine I personally would like to see on general sale here is the A1500, a dual disk machine in an A2000 case.

The "new machine" you are most likely to see at your friendly neighborhood dealer is an updated A2000, tentatively designated A2200. Individually the updates are

not particularly earth-shattering (e.g., a 68020 CPU, a socket for a math chip, 32-bit bus, SCSI interface and high-density floppy drives). At a projected street price of under \$1,000, it should be serious competition for the Mac II's and MessyDOS machines, providing Commodore gets with the program and markets the machine.

Speaking of marketing, I've seen some pretty *bizarre* ideas come out of PA, but the recent crop of ads appearing in *AmigaWorld*, et. al., have been stranger than usual. Why advertise CDTV in Amiga-

specific magazines? A CDTV is just an A500 with a CDROM player, at a bargain price of \$850. Surely if you advertise in a medium where the primary reader is an Amiga owner of some flavor, then the more sensible thing to advertise, would be an add-on, maybe the A590 CDROM player (which just happens to go on sale in Europe about now). I think this type of advertising should be aimed at potential buyers of CDTV, like the rest of the population. Try running the same ad in *USA Today*.

We've Got Winners!

For the last couple of issues, we've been advising you to get your post cards in to *Amiga News*, to enter our contest. First prize is an *Air Drive* from Advanced Integration Research in Logan, Utah.

Well, today was the big day. We put all the postcards and entry slips into a big box and chose 30, blindly, from the many, many hundreds that were there. We numbered these semi-finalists from 1 to 30. Then, using a 30-sided die that we had available (left over from a recent fantasy adventure game), we rolled it five times and selected the five finalists corresponding to the new numbers rolled. Finally, we rolled once more, on behalf of each finalist, for the chronology of finish. This is how it came out..

FIRST PLACE

Winner of the *Air Drive*
Don Van Goether, Reading PA

SECOND PLACE

Winner of *Crossword Construction*
Brian Berger, Irvington, NY

THIRD PLACE

Winner of *Crossword Construction*
Al Bailick, Morristown, NJ

FOURTH PLACE

Winner of *Crossword Construction*
Paul Levandowski, West Allis, WI

FIFTH PLACE

Winner of *Crossword Construction*
Jason Chambers, Newark, NJ

Second through fifth place winners will be receiving in the mail a copy of one of our personal favorite Amiga programs, *Crossword Construction Set*, from Designing Minds in Logan, Utah.

Congratulations to all our winners and thanks to everyone at the World of Amiga show, as well as those of you who sent in a postcard (one of which was a winner). A very special thanks to Wendy, at Designing Minds and Air Drives, without whom there would have been no prizes.

Next contest will begin in the September issue of *Amiga News*.

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Hardware Highlights

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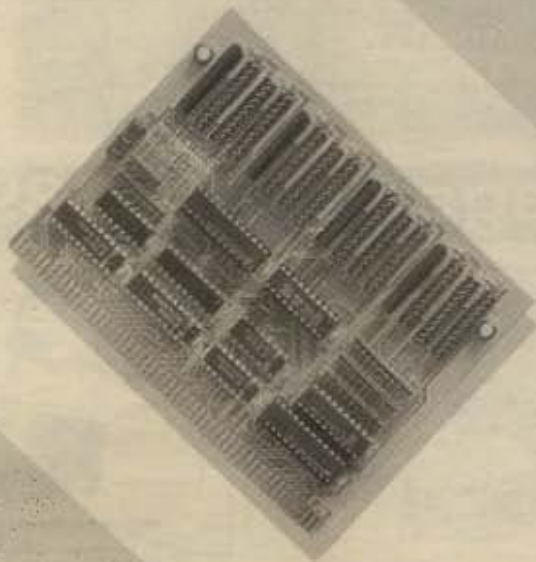
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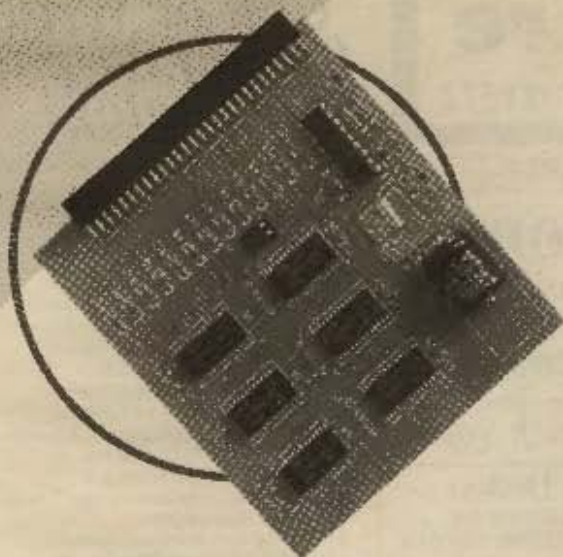
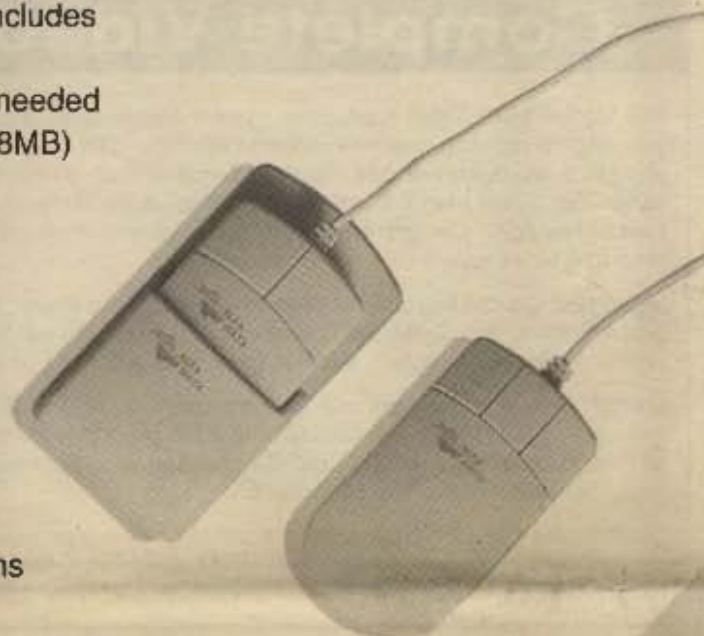


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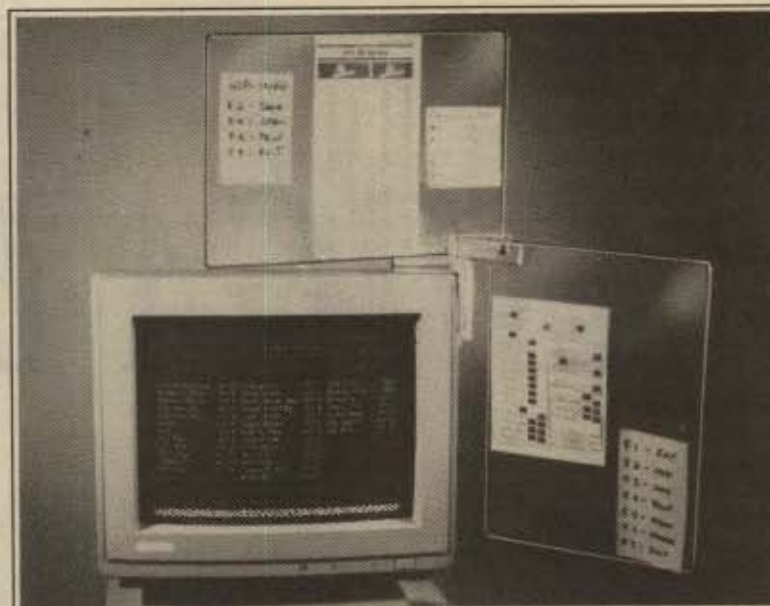
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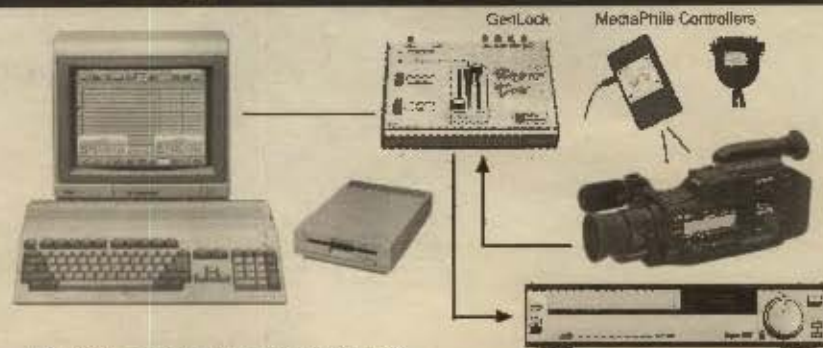
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Get On The Track (ball)

by
Graham
Heywood

Your mouse is an interesting thing. You use it without a second thought; it does its job, and everything is cool. Occasionally it requires a little cleaning, but that's OK. It's generally ignored — it's just a pointing device, and besides there's nothing better, right?

Well, that's what I thought, until I got a chance to use a trackball.

At first (maybe the first five minutes or so), using Microspeed's AmTrac trackball (M.A.T.) is noticeably different. You don't scoot your mouse, reach the edge of the mat, pick it up, place it down and continue to position your pointer. The trackball stays in one place and you roll the ball with your fingers. It's different; it's better.

The first thing you notice about M.A.T. is its size: approximately 7"x4"; it's a lot bigger than your regular mouse, and at first appears to take up too much space. But it doesn't move, so instead of taking up more space on my over-crowded desk, it creates a nice little space, just right for a few more disks to be 'filed', and at 14 ounces, it will sit quite happily in one place and not move around. No longer do I have to take my eyes off the screen and track down that elusive mouse, which at times seemed to have a mind of its own.

The M.A.T. comes with two large and one smaller, centrally located button. Left and right buttons operate the normal functions. The middle button is a "drag lock" button. The "drag lock" performs the same function as clicking and holding down a button while moving the cursor. With the drag lock, you no longer have to hold the button down. Not very useful, I thought at first. But try it for a while and then go back to your regular mouse. You'll find yourself searching for that "drag lock" function.

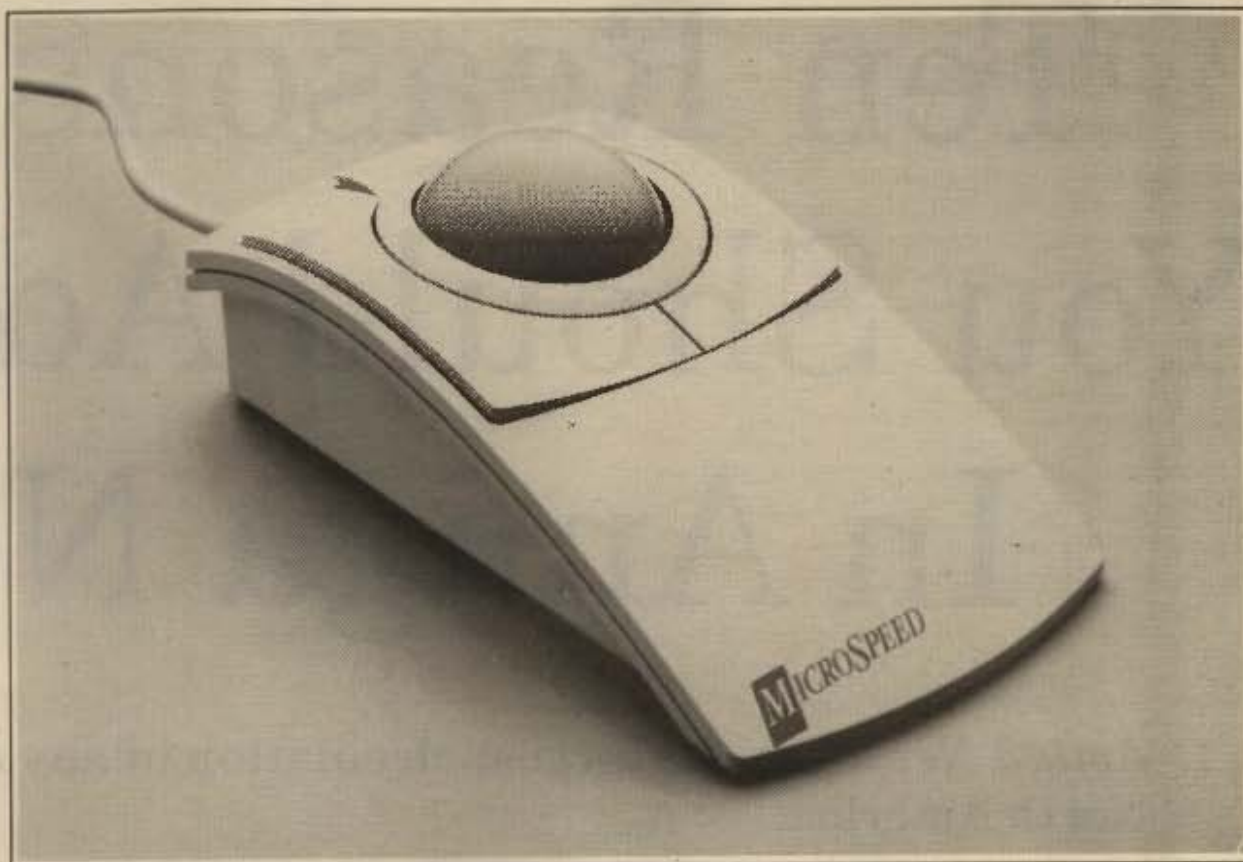
INSTALLATION

If you need instructions on how to install this, then get yourself an IBM. The only thing you may want to do is to alter your mouse preference to its highest speed. The M.A.T. is very precise and gives pixel by pixel control, even with the accelerator option on WB 2.0. Of course, it is compatible with all Amigas.

The motion detectors are opto-electronic and consist of an LED source and infrared optical sensor, so I would hazard a guess at a very long lifetime - I should be able to transfer the M.A.T. to my Amiga 9000. If someone (no names, but his initials are BOB!) happens to spill a Dr. Pepper on the M.A.T., then it's just a matter of removing three screws and a quick rubdown with alcohol (sounds like fun!).

If your mouse is nearing the end of its cord (or even if it's not), retire it and get yourself a trackball. Try it for a while. If you don't like it, send it to me; I've got a nice home waiting for it.

Contact: MicroSpeed, Inc., 44000 Old Warm Springs Blvd., Fremont, CA 94538. (510) 490-1403. □



The AmTRAC trackball from MicroSpeed.

Get Rid of That Cord

by Bob
Liddil

The most aggravating of situations often incubate the most improbable of ideas, which always seem to become the most ingenious of inventions. That's how it always seems to be, and that's definitely what seems to have happened in the case of Mouse Control.

The aggravating situation: that tangle of wires that always seems to accompany any conventional mouse. You've been there. The more you use the mouse, the more twisted and bothersome the wires that connect it to the Amiga seem to be.

The improbable idea: figure out a way to isolate the wire from the mouse pad, thereby eliminating the clutter.

Imagine a heavily weighted base, flat on the bottom, rounded on the top, into which has been inserted a vertical protrusion some six or so inches tall. It looks very much like the pointed thing that was used to spike bills on after they were paid. The protrusion has a spring loader on the bottom, allowing it to flex. Instead of a pointed end, Mouse Control is forked with little spikey plastic teeth on it, just the right size to grab and hold a mouse wire. This allows the wire to be suspended six-odd inches above the mouse, with a little slack left for good measure, and the rest of the mouse wire is off close to the computer... completely out of the way.

Dave gave the retailer plenty of consideration as well, in the conceiving of this idea. The colorful, bright blue and yellow box has all the information on it that a consumer could wish for. The \$14.95 price tag is neither cheap nor excessive for what the product does.

On looking at the diagram, or even Mouse Control itself, a potential customer might ask, "Do I really need this?" But I can truthfully say, after six weeks of using it, "How did I ever get along without it?"

Total Mouse Control is the ultimate mouse(wire)trap. It works as advertised. Send Dave \$14.95 today and if it doesn't tickle you to death, send me a nasty letter.

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AMIGA VALLEY, UTAH, USA

By Bob Liddil

The Cache Valley, Logan and Smithfield, Utah, are known nationally and internationally for cheese, holograms and the scenic campus of the Utah State University, nestled between two awesome mountain ranges. It is a quiet little place, just north of Salt Lake City and west of the Wyoming outlands, where the good life is a reality and not an abstract. At one end of the valley is a commercial bungi-jumping tower; at the other is Bear Lake, home to pioneers, resorts and the "Bear Lake Monster" (not unlike "Nessie" of Scotland and "Champ" of Lake Champlain).

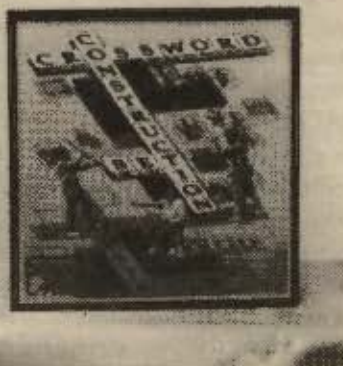
Right smack in the middle of all this is a little computer store called ComputerWise, which offers a better selection of Amiga hardware and software than I've seen in some big city venues. The shelves are packed with software for every purpose, hardware accessories (including a polarized screen that I saw actually take the shiver out of a high-res video display), and even an IBM386 so that a customer could see the difference between a stock Amiga and a loaded PC.

One corner attracted my attention immediately. A solid wall of Amigas in every possible configuration greeted my eyes. Some were rigged with stereo sound, some were attached to Toasters. Many memory configurations were represented, so that any piece of software that needed to be previewed could be roughly approximated to the user's home setup.

More importantly, this equipment is immediately available to the customer. As I stood there observing, a mom came in with her youngster's homework on a 3.5" floppy. It needed printing. The task was jumped upon as enthusiastically as if she had been waiting to buy a major system. This place is friendly!

So it came as no surprise when I discovered that the Amiga has made a serious impact on the computer population of Cache Valley. Dalice Nilson, a lifelong Smithfield resident told me that she has literally made hundreds of new friends since acquiring her Amiga. I believe it, considering the reception given me, and I'm an out-of-towner.

The Cache Valley's 100,000 or so population is spread out to the borders of Wyoming and Idaho, encompassing both city-dwellers, smaller towns and dairy farms nestled away from the bright lights. An estimated 2,500 Amiga users live here, including members of CAUSE (Cache Amiga Users Supporters and Enthusiasts), and the Cache Valley User's Club, two extremely avid and active groups that meet regularly.



Curtis Wood's excellent Crossword Construction set. Ask for it at your local store.

ComputerWise is the central supply hub for all these Amiga users, and also serves to introduce the wonders of Amiga to the new and uninitiated. General Manager Curtis Wood is the spark plug driving this smoothly running Amiga sales and service engine. He tries to be available to users for the solving of all kinds of problems. Cache Valley Amiga users have come to depend on Curtis Wood and ComputerWise as being able to fix anything in the Amiga world.

Curtis's unique point of view includes the perspective of a software author who literally watched a beloved program be ravaged by copyright scofflaws and thieving pirates. *Crossword Construction* is the program I will be using in a new crossword puzzle feature of *Amiga News* (a review of this neat program will be also forthcoming). When *Crossword Construction* was released, after much time and expense on the part of Designing Minds (a sister company to ComputerWise), no copy protection was added. Curtis, as both author and user, felt that protection schemes lessen the usability of a program. Within days of its release, *Crossword Construction* had journeyed around the world as a bootleg and returned to the Cache Valley with a pornographic loader on it and a message to send money to some pirate post office box in Belgium.

Curtis shook his head sadly as he told me this story and said, "It was pretty tough to take. Not only did orders drop off to nothing after the initial release, but they also put this obscenity on my program. Most people would just take it for granted that the porno part was done by me. It was the ultimate insult."

Since that incident, *Crossword Construction* has sold only a few copies a month, as word of mouth concerning its excellence moves among honest Amiga users. But Curtis is not bitter. He has simply cut back on software programming and concentrated on bringing the best possible Amiga sales and service to the Cache Valley. It is the programming world's

loss, as well as a prime rebuttal to the pirate moron's argument that swapping and duplicating copyrighted material only affects "big companies that can afford it." One only has to see the sadness in Curtis Wood's eyes when he speaks of *Crossword Construction* to know that the little guy gets hurt worse.

In a way, the Cache Valley is a microcosm of the larger Amiga world. Ross Trowbridge, a returned Mormon missionary and Amiga user, is also an extremely talented computer animator (we'll be hearing from Ross from time to time as he reviews software for us). His Amiga 500 is loaded to the limits and he is typical of the Cache Valley's love affair with the Amiga. He demonstrated a wide range of abilities with popular programs such as *Deluxe Paint* and a *Vista* demo that makes islands, trees and waterfalls right before your eyes, using fractals. His enthusiasm for the Amiga knows no bounds. Whether it be a *Star Trek* public domain program or a sophisticated animation sequencer, Ross advocates that a new user dive right in and get his feet wet (a thing I fully intend to do). Even the Utah Jazz in the last minutes of the playoffs was not enough to draw Ross away from his keyboard. He allowed me to bring a USS Enterprise fly-by animation back to New Hampshire with me. I like it a lot.

But as enthusiastic as Ross is about the world of Amiga, he frowns when questioned about the piracy incident that killed *Crossword Construction*. He told me, "You know, pirates hurt everyone. . ."

He didn't elaborate much further, but it was plain to see that he was upset about it, as are many other, but not all Amiga users in the valley.

There are five Bulletin Boards in the Cache Valley local calling area. One, in particular, is famous world wide for "exploding pig" jokes (a left handed referral to the proliferation of farm animals in residential areas of Smithfield). A typical Amiga BBS exploding pig joke reads, "In what language do Pigs program their Amiga 500s?" The answer is a brain numbing and groan inducing single word, "Swine-ary!"

That single joke pretty much sums up Cache Valley. The people who live here work hard at their jobs and play hard with their Amigas. Dalice Nilson is one of the reigning players in a popular game called "Trade Wars." James Diffendaffer, a youngster not long out of high school, enjoys a level of Video Toaster proficiency that would qualify him to work at a major TV station. He seems quite happy helping the customers at ComputerWise achieve their full potential as Amiga users. Utah State University has an entire Amiga computer laboratory dedicated to finding better ways to do computer assisted education (I briefly used a multi-media program designed to teach Mandarin Chinese, but it could have just as easily been teaching me anything).

In short, Cache Valley *hums* with Amiga applications I met a young fellow named Ray, whose part time after school job is to re-enter numbers that have been processed by the boss's IBM. Ray interfaced an Amiga to the IBM, taught it to spit the numbers back to the PC in blocks at the appropriate time, then plays games in the foreground while this is happening!

Truly life is good in Amiga Valley, Utah, USA.

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FCC, Personal Computers and The Law

Does your computer meet FCC standards? Here's how to tell

by Marlene Jackson

The Federal Communications Commission has found Personal Computers to be the cause of interference to various Safety Radio Communications Services, including police, fire, emergency medical, aeronautical and telephone communications systems, as well as television reception and other electronic Home Entertainment equipment (HEEE).

In a continuing effort to decrease interference from personal computers, the FCC requires all computer manufacturers, vendors and distributors marketing or selling computing devices designed for home use (personal computers) to obtain a grant of equipment authorization and FCC ID number.

Selling or advertising for sale non-compliant computing devices is a violation of the FCC's rules and regulations and the Communications Act of 1934, as amended and may result in fines up to \$10,000 per day or imprisonment for up to one year.

If you purchase your computers from other dealers, distributors and/or wholesalers and simply re-sell them, you must make sure that the units you purchase have valid FCC ID labels clearly visible on the outside of the computer case. Be aware that some FCC ID numbers have been found to be "phony" or "made up" while

other FCC ID numbers are valid, but are for a different computer. Make sure that the FCC ID number is not only present and valid, but is the correct FCC ID number for the computer it is attached to! You can check to see if an FCC ID number is valid simply by calling the FCC PAL system (described below).

PUBLIC ACCESS LINK (PAL)

The Public Access Link (PAL) was designed to allow users of the system to access information regarding pending and granted equipment authorization data for equipment subject to certification, type acceptance, type approval, notification and other general information concerning the Commission's Equipment Authorization Program for radio frequency equipment.

The PAL system is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and can be accessed by modem at (301) 725-1072. PAL is presently configured to operate at either 300 or 1200 bauds, 8 bits, no parity and 1 stop bit (8N1).

IDENTIFYING AND RESOLVING COMPUTER INTERFERENCE

As personal computers continue to grow in popularity and processing power, more and more computers will be put into operation in the home, business and industrial environments. Interference from these computers will continue to increase and

continued on page 18

Amiga - User Unfriendly?

WE DON'T THINK SO, KEN

I guess I'm pretty fortunate to get so many of the newsletters that Amiga User Groups produce. They provide a lot of interesting reading. But an article in MACRO's (Phoenix, AZ) newsletter got me pig-biting mad. The author, Ken St. Andre, complains in his gaming corner about the "User-unfriendly Amiga operating system and the lax-nonexistent error-checking of New World games." Ken goes on to say: "You might think I'd learn my lesson after the first disaster - my hard drive was corrupted and I lost all the games on it after just turning off the *King's Bounty* one night. Last month around two in the morning after several hours of play in the *Isles of Terra*. I decided to go to bed, saved the game, but did not quit by the New World command, and just turned it off. Even though the hard drive light wasn't on at the time, the file was corrupt, and next time I tried to run it, the whole disk hung, and all I could do was turn it off and corrupt the rest of the disk (which then, in ways that I don't understand led to a hard drive controller failure). I admit that the problem is my fault. I could have clicked on quit and everything probably would have been fine. Still, this kind of tragedy is stupid, and could very easily turn me into an IBM or Apple user. A sudden loss of power would have exactly the same effect - corrupting either the hard drive or the floppy in use when it went down. No chance to save and quit - too bad you're screwed!" Ken goes on to say: "This kind

of thing doesn't happen with IBM machines."

The thing I took exception to was the "user-unfriendly" statement. One of my Amigas has been with me since 1986; she (Amiga is Spanish for 'girl-friend') follows me everywhere - she sometimes even sleeps in my bedroom. I admit that I've been a little overindulgent with her at times, buying her a little extra memory and a nice 40 meg hard drive, and she has more than occasionally caused a moment of grief as the Guru came to visit. But, and it's a big BUT, in my experience all crashes have been software related. I've had the occasional crash due to memory fragmentation, usually after a long session of using many different programs. I've also had power failures while using her - the most recent was during the writing of this article - 3 mini ones in a row and none of them trashed my hard disk or even bothered the controller. I also have the bad habit of not closing down some programs completely before powering down, and I have never experienced any ill-effects from it.

Ken mentions in his article both programs that trashed his hard drive originated from New World Computing. Could this be a coincidence? Could it possibly be that New World might be the problem and NOT the "user-unfriendly" Amiga operating system? And as for his assertion that this kind of thing doesn't happen with IBM machines, just ask my friend Bob about his trials and tribulations. Ken is an excellent

Continued on page 17

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FLICKER FREE VIDEO

by Graham Heywood

There is a certain natural progression of life in Amiga Land. The first order is to acquire more memory, since it seems that all the *really* interesting software is a couple of megs or more. The next requirement is a hard drive - we need to load the software in seconds, rather than minutes. Then we need SPEED - after all, the basic 68000 C.P.U. is a trifle slow for a lot of applications.

THE DISEASE

In all this upgrading that the basic Amiga user goes through, the one thing that *should* be high on the list is often overlooked: DISPLAY. *Workbench 2.0* on an Amiga with the Enhanced Chip set and the basic 1084 monitor usually sold with the basic set-up has a multitude of screen resolutions that vary from usable to irritating to unusable. The "interlaced" mode fall into the "irritating" category, to such an extent that friends visiting while I have been working in an "interlaced" mode have been known to fall writhing to the floor, clutching their eyes. I have found that attaching a couple of bungee cord to my chair and suspending it from the ceiling and attaching it to a small electric motor (running at 15 revs per second) and wearing RayBan aviators soothed the problem somewhat.

THE CURE

The Amiga was originally designed to output its video signal at 15.75 KHz to be shown on RGB monitors, composite monitors or television screens which have a field depth of 262.5 scan lines (half of 525). To get resolutions higher than 200, the Amiga has to send the information in two halves. Unfortunately the phosphor on the screen will start to fade before the next

field. The only real answer to getting rid of the flicker is ICD's *Flicker Free Video* and a VGA monitor. *Flicker Free Video* works by converting a two-field interlaced frame into a single field and outputting the resulting signal at 31.5 KHz, which unfortunately the poor old 1084 can't accept. But there is a plethora of relatively inexpensive VGA monitors out there to which 31.5 KHz is their natural habitat.

Flicker Free Video works by intercepting the necessary video lines from the Denise chip (Denise is the custom chip that generates the video signal). It then stores the first field in a three megabit buffer, combines it with the second field and send the results to the monitor. When using a non-interlaced mode, this in effect doubles the scan lines displayed. In real life this means that those scan lines which are visible in low-res are gone, giving a clean, sharp-looking display. It is also a cure for motion artifacting (the splitting of fast-moving graphic objects.)

INSTALLATION

Installation of the *Flicker Free Video* 2 board is a breeze on 500's and 2000's. On the 1000 I would rate it slightly more difficult (requiring soldering a short jumper wire). The hardest part on a 500 installation is locating a torx screwdriver to get the cover off. (Opening your Amiga will void your warranty, so you may want your friendly local dealer to perform this operation). After assembling the necessary tools - a screwdriver, small plastic screwdriver and IC puller (the plastic screwdriver and IC puller aren't really necessary, but they help) - the next step is to remove all the bits connected to your computer; power cord, etc.

Open the computer casing, find Denise, check the number against the documentation and set the jumpers accordingly.

Remove and insert Denise into the *Flicker Free Video* board and place the board into Denise's original home. Plug in the supplied ribbon cable, attach the VGA monitor and power up. You should have a rock-steady display. Depending upon which version of Denise you own, there may be some slight adjustment needed, although

the *Flicker Free* board will automatically adjust to small variations in frequency. If the display appears unstable, there is a variable capacitor to perform coarse adjustment. This is where the plastic screwdriver is useful. A metal screwdriver will affect the board's operation and you will have to remove it to see what effect your adjustment has made.

Continued on page 18

CLARIFICATIONS AND CORRECTIONS

Clarifications and Corrections

Our May issue inadvertently omitted to mention *Haitex Resources, Inc.* as an exhibitor at the World of Commodore show. The pictured "booth beside ours" was, in fact, *Haitex Resources*, displaying their *X-Specs 3-D* virtual reality glasses. Sorry for the oversight, Shawn.

Readers of Shawn's article on the history of virtual reality (May 1992), please note the following corrections: the Resolver graphics card is manufactured by Digital Micronics of San Diego; *Progressive Peripherals'* graphics card is called the *RAMbrandt*, not *Rembrandt*. We regret the error.

Continued from page 16

UNFRIENDLY

games reviewer, he was one of the guiding lights behind the *Tunnels and Trolls* game system, a *Dungeons and Dragons* variant, and he also helped to produce the delightful *Sorcerer's Apprentice* magazine, but he really ought to lay the blame for his misfortunes at New Worlds door.

Oh, one more thing, if you are a member of a User Group and your group doesn't receive *Amiga News*, please contact our circulation department for details of a special offer.

- Graham



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Continued from page 17

FLICKER FREE VIDEO

All that remains to do is to hang the ribbon cable out the back of the Amiga. You may want to take a rasp file to the case to insure the cable is not pinched when you reassemble.

After reassembly, it's time to use the *Flicker Free Preferences Program*, which allows you to set not only the rows displayed, but also the number of columns displayed, which is very useful. For example, one of the major annoyances of using *Professional Page* at 100% magnification is the display of 7+ inches, when you reach the edge of a full width box, the whole display moves over and redraws. Increasing the number of columns displayed means that *ProPage* displays a full width page of 8.5 inches. Also, a little futzing around with the columns and rows, means that while using *Pagestream*, the screen aspect ratio will display at 1:1. Also adjustable via the preferences software is the vertical scan frequency from 49 to 100 Hz.

All VGA monitors that I tried were perfectly acceptable including a \$200 CTX with a dot pitch of .38.

After using the *Flicker Free Video 2* for a while, it's my opinion that using my Amiga without it would be intolerable. Now that the scan lines are gone and interlace screens no longer shudder and shake, I can see the rest of the world normally, without walking around looking like a terminal DT case. If you are not the proud owner of a 3000 and use your Amiga regularly, then place the *Flicker Free Video 2* board high on your shopping list. Dealers should encourage first-time buyers to buy the board and a cheap VGA monitor, rather than stick them with a 1084.

Retail price for the *Flicker Free Video 2* board is \$189.

Contact: ICD, Inc., 1220 Rock Street, Rockford, IL 61101. (815)968-2228.

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Continued from page 16

FCC, Personal Computers and the Law

become a greater and greater problem in the years to come.

While the most common form of interference from personal computers occurs in townhouses or apartment complexes where the computer is situated close to a neighbor's TV or radio (perhaps on an adjoining wall between the apartments), there are occasions where personal computers have interfered with police, taxicab, aviation safety communications and other radio communications services.

You can easily determine if your computer is the cause of such interference by turning your computer off while observing the interference.

Interference from personal computers can take the form of a distortion of the picture, whining type tones, static noise and/or herringbone patterns through the TV picture.

If your computer is the cause of inter-

ference, try one or more of the following measures:

- Re-orient the receiver antenna or your TV or radio.
- Relocate the computer with respect to the receiver.
- Improve the shielding in the computer.
- Move the computer to a different outlet so that the computer and receiver are on different circuits.
- Attach a Low Pass filter to the power cord of the computer.
- If necessary, consult a dealer or TV technician for suggestions.

The FCC requires that all computers be tested and certified to comply with Part 15 of the FCC regulations before they are permitted to be sold or advertised for sale in the United States. FCC emission limits

on computer devices are designed to provide protection against interference between users and prevent a personal computer from causing interference to other radio services.

You can determine if your computer has been certified by the FCC for radio frequency radiation and shielding by checking to see that your computer has a label with the FCC identification number.

REQUEST FOR RULES

You may obtain a copy of the FCC Rules and Regulations, Title 47 (CFR), Parts 0-19 from the Government Printing Office Bookstore. Forward request for regulations to:

Superintendent of Documents
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Continued from page 1

IS THE AMIGA DOOMED?

a competition where there's no gold and maybe not much glory.

WHAT'S THE PRIZE?

So what's the prize in this competition? The major prize is one that will benefit all: THE SURVIVAL OF AMIGADOM. The minor prizes — well, you may have contributed to some pretty neat TV commercials or newspaper ads.

The rules of the competition are pretty loose. If you have any ideas or contributions to make, you're eligible. By contributions, I mean time and creative ability, not money.

It's obvious that Commodore is not going to spend a zillion dollars in network advertising; so we make the winning ads available to dealers for local TV ads. CBM, with its "cooperative advertising", picks up a percentage of the tab; the dealer gets increased sales; CBM increases sales; and the Amiga moves out of intensive care into the real world.

A little simplistic, you say. But consider that the average dealer has been the lifeblood of Amiga, and anything he can do to increase sales of machines will improve add-on sales, increase profitability of manufacturers, and encourage more people to join Amiga Land.

A few things to bear in mind: a 30-second commercial is actually 29.5 seconds; the local dealer will need a space to drop in his name, etc. So if you feel like a budding Spike Lee, let's hear from you.

One other thing: *Amiga News* is going to be twisting some arms of the major vendors in Amiga Land, but we don't have friends everywhere. If you have contacts, please use them. We need everyone involved. Don't leave it to someone else. If everyone says it's someone else's problem, we'll have a dead computer on our hands, and the Amiga is too good a machine to let die. □

SimAnt

When is a game, not a game?

by Lee Heywood

According the documentation, *SimAnt* is not a game, it's a toy. What's the difference? A game has a beginning, a middle, and an end. A toy is open ended, you can do basically what you want with it.

In *SimAnt* you are the guiding intelligence behind an ant colony. Whether you rule the world or just survive in an ant-eat-ant world is your choice, but you're smarter than a bunch of ants, so it's going to be easy. Just breed up a bunch of soldier ants and go over to the red ant colony and kick butt. Ah, if things were that simple then life, the universe, and everything, would just fall into a nice orderly place and I'd probably rule it.

In the life and death world of *SimAnt*, many of your ants will die and even the ant you control will croak, but the organization goes on, since in a group mind, no individual is vitally important. Your death simply means being reborn back in the home nest, a minor inconvenience in time, but that's all. You can body-hop into a different caste of ant, useful if you want to be queen for a day, or maybe be a soldier and chomp on a wandering caterpillar.

SimAnt comes with a tutorial version, useful if you're in a hurry to load and play; a quick game version — simply wipe out the neighboring red ants and you've won; and the full version — take over the backyard and drive those yucky humans out of the house. There is also an experimental game with no winning or losing, but a lot of tools to play with.

It also comes with a comprehensive manual containing not only how to use *SimAnt*, but a wealth of information about the family formicidae. *SimAnt* also comes in two resolution versions, low-res which needs 1MB of RAM and hi-res

which needs 2MB of RAM. *SimAnt* can be run from floppies, but if you have a hard disk then life becomes a little easier. The hard-disk install routine is the one from Sylvan Technical Arts, which should be the industry standard.

The major differences between the low and hi-res versions are the ability to resize the edit window in hi-res as well as the nicer graphics.

Well, enough of this waffling, let's get into the game (sorry, toy). I should be able to outsmart a bunch of ants. In a quick version, their brain power is extremely small, only about equivalent to a Macintosh II (Maxis' words, not mine). First order of business is to find food. Easy, just beware of spiders, ant lions, human feet, and the odd lawnmower, and keep a feeler out for rain.

Food seems to be a quite important objective, so once found, send out a request for help to bring it back to the nest. May as well leave a few soldiers to guard it from those nasty red ants; get the food back to the nest, then alter the behavior pattern of the nest to produce more workers to get more food. Then the red ants come storming in and kill off the queen. I lose — maybe the experimental game is more my style.

SimAnt is not a casual occupation. Be prepared to spend many hours/days/months in this electronic simulation. Be prepared to wake up in the middle of the night, muttering: "if I set the ratio of..."; in other words, it's addictive to the max. I agree with Maxis' definition: it's not a game.

Further details on *SimAnt* can be obtained from: Maxis, Two Theatre Square, Suite 230, Orinda, CA 94563-3041, (510) 254-9700. □

SMPTE Time Code from your Amiga

TCGen is the latest innovation to be added to the MediaPhile family of products from Interactive MicroSystems. TCGen generates industry standard SMPTE time code without the need for additional hardware. TCGen outputs an audio signal encoded with SMPTE time code from your Amiga computer. The time code is then dubbed directly onto the linear audio track of your source tape. When used together with *MediaEditor* and a *MediaPhile* controller you can achieve near frame accurate recording. TCGen is the only SMPTE time code generator that doesn't require additional hardware.

TCGen is included with *MediaPhile* utilities. Retail price is \$200.

Contact: Daniel VanBuskirk, Interactive MicroSystems, Inc., 9 Red Roof Lane, Salem, NH 03079. (603) 898-3545. □

WHAT'S A 570?

An A570 is the CD-ROM drive for the A500 that goes on sale in Europe in May, with a price in Britain of 269 Pounds. Given the usual CBM exchange rate, that will approximately equal \$269 when/if it arrives here.

The CD-ROM drive plugs into the left-side expansion port and requires the A500 to carry 1MB of Chip RAM. It accepts all the CDTV titles.

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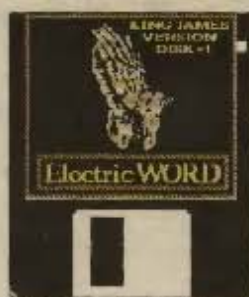
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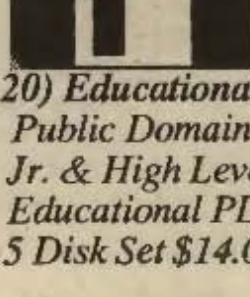
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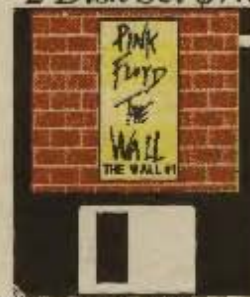
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