Amiga Mail News

Commodore International Announces CDTV at CES

Commodore International unveiled its Commodore Dynamic Total Vision (CDTV) interactive multimedia player June 2nd at the Summer Consumer Electronics Show in Chicago. The player is the first consumer-oriented product to combine the massive storage capabilities of the CD-ROM with the multitasking, audio, graphics, and processing power of an advanced personal computer into a single simple to use, affordable unit. The player connects directly to a television set and home stereo unit to become an interactive information, entertainment, and education center. The unit is controlled by a simple to use infrared remote.

CDTV will have many uses. Through the use of CD-ROM technology, reference materials such as dictionaries, world atlases, and encyclopedias can be accessed and cross referenced at the touch of a button. Packages that teach cooking, sports, and foreign languages as well as those that offer interactive learning for children are planned. Music from rock to opera will be enhanced with computer graphics. Video games will be significantly more sophisticated in depth of play, sound, and graphics than on any other video game or personal computer format. Commodore plans to have a library of more than 100 applications for CDTV available when the product launches. The majority of discs will carry a suggested retail price ranging between $30 and $100.

Nolan Bushnell, general manager of Commodore's new Interactive Consumer Products division, identifies two groups of consumers for CDTV. The first group consists of enthusiasts who currently have advanced audio, video, and computer systems in their homes. The second group is made up of educated adults who want to provide their families with interactive multimedia education, information, and entertainment, but do not want to learn how to use a conventional computer or buy a limited game machine.

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CDTV is the first consumer player to begin to realize the potential of multimedia Compact Disc technology. CD-ROM discs have enormous storage capacity - more than 550 megabytes of data - the equivalent of 250,000 pages of text. This data storage capacity enables program developers to design applications which are significantly more sophisticated, challenging, and more exciting than those available on any existing computer or home entertainment format.

In addition to being able to access data stored on a CD-ROM disc, CDTV can also be used to play conventional audio Compact Discs. In the audio mode, CDTV is fully programmable, and features 8-times oversampling and dual 16-bit D/A converters, a front panel 24-hour clock, stereo headphone jack, and a full-function fluorescent display provides time, track, and volume information at a glance.

The basic CDTV player contains various input and output ports. In addition to the familiar Amiga DB-23 analog RGB video output, the CDTV player has composite video, component video Y-C (S connector type for S-VHS and Hi-8), and RF modulated (F connector) output with optional genlock capabilities via a plug in module. An RS-232 serial interface and a Centronics parallel interface can be found on the unit's rear panel, as well as an external Amiga floppy drive port. Stereo RCA type plugs provide audio out. A front panel personal RAM card port, which allows saving and storing of up to 64K of data, will also be available.

Some additional accessories will include interfaces for an infrared keyboard and an infrared, two-player game controller, a keyboard, an expansion module to house a hard drive, modem, and floppy disk drive, an infrared joystick, and an infrared trackball. There is also a hard-wired alternative to the infrared keyboard, mouse, and joystick.

CDTV is expected to retail for less than $1000. Commodore plans to market the product in the United States through high-end audio/video specialty retailers, upscale department stores, and selected retail chains. Commodore intends to launch CDTV internationally.

Some Additional Specs

- ❏ Motorola MC68000 at 7.15909 MHz (NTSC)
- ❏ 1 Mb chip RAM
- ❏ 2K non-volatile RAM reserved for system (clock, prefs, etc.)
- ❏ 512K ROM
- ❏ Intelligent video slot (for optional genlock, RF board, etc.) 15 pin edge connector
- ❏ DMA slot - for SCSI, LAN, etc.
- ❏ Amiga Kickstart 1.3 in ROM
- ❏ ISO 9660 File System Handler
- ❏ High-speed decompression for graphics, audio, and sound.