Amiga Mail News

Commercial Software and the A500+

As you are probably aware, a new configuration of the A500 called the A500+ is being sold in Europe. The A500+ contains 2.04 in ROM, the ECS chip set, one meg of chip RAM (no fast RAM), and A501+ expansion capability to 2 meg of CHIP RAM.

The A500+ is not being marketed in the U.S. at this time. However, CATS realizes that many developers distribute products in several countries, some of which are selling the A500+.

In order to avoid confusing consumers in countries where Commodore is not marketing the A500+, CATS requests that if possible, outside of Europe, developers not mention the A500+ in their product's advertising or on their outer packaging. Instead, CATS suggests that developers mention compatibility with 2.04 and the ECS chip set.

However, if necessary, developers may mention the A500+ inside your product documentation, and certainly may answer A500+ related questions from customers in countries where Commodore is marketing the A500+.

Because Commodore is selling the A500+, developers should test their software for compatibility with it. Aside from testing software on a real A500+, An excellent alternative is to test on a certain configuration of A2000. An A2000 with an ECS chip set (Agnus and Denise), 1 meg of chip RAM, *no fast RAM*, a 68000 processor, and 2.04 in ROM is equivalent to an A500+. This A2000 configuration will also become more prevalent among consumers as base A2000 owners upgrade to ECS and 2.04.

It is important to test your commercial software on either an A500+ or an A2000 with the exact configuration described above. Some of the possible software pitfalls only show up when specific components of that configuration are present. For example:

A chip RAM only machine with 2.04 ROMs places the Supervisor stack in low chip memory. Writing over an arbitrary low chip memory address can therefore cause an Amiga to hang or crash. Games that do this must provide their *own* Supervisor stack.

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A machine with an ECS chip set and 2.04 ROMs causes copper lists to be different. Blindly poking copper lists (illegal) will not work.

A machine with a 68000 processor and 2.04 ROMs can lead to processor exception #3 (address error) if code is improperly using an IntuiMessage->IAddress pointer as a structure pointer before ascertaining that the IntuiMessage is of a Class documented to contain a particular pointer in its IAddress.

New License Amendments for Installer and AmigaGuide™

CATS now has Workbench License amendments available that allow Workbench License holders to distribute the application installation utility, *Installer*, and the Amiga hypertext viewer, *AmigaGuide*. There is no charge for these amendments.

Installer is hard disk installation utility written by David Joiner. It offers three user-selectable modes of installation: Novice, Intermediate, and Expert. In novice mode, the installation script handles making any installation decisions. The Intermediate and Expert modes allow the user different degrees of control over the installation. Installer uses a Lisp-like scripting language. The current version of *Installer* on BIX is 1.6.

AmigaGuide by David Junod is a hypertext utility which is extremely useful for user documentation, tutorials, and help. *AmigaGuide* is a user-friendly text viewer which allows the user to reference related material by clicking on highlighted words. The text files that *AmigaGuide* displays can have special commands in them which tells *AmigaGuide* which words to highlight and what node of information they link to. Highlighted words may also execute an ARexx script or an external command. The *AmigaGuide* distribution also contains *WBDisplay*, a powerful tools for displaying an ILBM in a Workbench window. *WBDisplay* provides color remapping and user-controlled zooming, scaling, and scrolling. These capabilities are handy for managing even very large bitmap images, such as schematics. The current version of *AmigaGuide* on BIX is 33.1369.

One other amendment is also available to allow distribution of *iffparse.library* under a 1.3 Workbench License.

These amendments are available to any developer who holds a current, valid Workbench License. Special amendments are also available for compiler and assembler vendors who only have an Includes License. Execution of any amendment requires photocopies of page 1 and 3 of your original license, plus photocopies documenting your compliance with that license. To request one or more amendments and instructions, contact CATS Administration or your local support organization.

Currently, the latest versions of *Installer* and *AmigaGuide* are only available through Commodore's closed electronic developer conferences. At a later date, we plan to create release disks for these products and make them available on disk and to non-registered developers.