

Dear AC,

I ordered and very promptly received a crystal track ball from Amicon Technology, an advertiser in your July 1995 issue. The track ball is cool; a red and green light emitting diode colorizes the clear center ball. It has a lock down for the left mouse button to ease the coordination problem of rolling the ball while holding the left button.

I added a Radio Shack 276-624a micromini toggle switch (using my pencil soldering iron as a drill) on to the right button so menu items can be selected with the same minimal effort.

This is especially useful to one Amiga user who has cerebral palsy; I ordered a second ball for myself, donating the modified one to her. We had built her a supermouse two years ago complete with left and right button lockdowns from a discarded mouse, clock parts, and duct tape. It looked more like a rat than a mouse, but it functioned. It is failing now and hopefully the modified track ball will see her for two or more years to come.

Thanks to Amicon for the part and to your magazine for helping to keep the Amiga "store" open.

Richard L. Collins

Dear AC,

I am composing this letter on my Amiga 1200. I purchased it about two years ago for several reasons, not the least of which was that it was the most cost effective machine for the variety of tasks I planned to use it for.

Since then, as I am sure every Amiga owner is well aware, the price of PCs has fallen dramatically. What is attractive to the people that buy PCs can't possibly be the ugly command line based operating system, or the inefficient GUI utility that sits on top of it (Windows) trying to emulate a proper multitasking system (and doing a poor job of it at that!), or the fact that adding peripherals requires a degree in electrical engineering. What, then, brings them in droves to the PC and away from more elegant solutions such as the Amiga?

Maybe it's the fact that the average user (especially the new user) doesn't know or care whether the computer is executing the task efficiently, as long as the task is being executed. And if the computer is doing the job it has to, why pay more for something that is supposed to be technically superior if you aren't qualified to tell the difference?

As the new owner of the Amiga, Escom is going to have a huge job on their hands trying to persuade new users into the Amiga ring,

and number one on their list of things to change about the Amiga is its price. I just finished talking to a local dealer about the prospect of dealing with Amiga Technologies, and his answer was a question. He asked "...would you as a user pay close to \$2000 (Canadian) for an Amiga 1200, or \$4000 for an Amiga 4000 with no monitor?..." I don't think even the most dedicated Amiga user (myself being one) would answer yes to that question, not when full blown Multimedia PCs are going for around \$2000 (monitor included). But Escom is not stupid for buying into such a challenge.

At the risk of being totally pessimistic about the future of the Amiga, here's what I think Escom's plans are: 1) Charge ridiculously high prices for Amigas until the user base completely disintegrates at which time they will most certainly have broken even. 2) With the Amiga eliminated as a multimedia competitor in the European market they will make piles of money selling their own brand of multimedia PCs (which is what they did before purchasing the Commodore name). 3) Make even more money from the Amiga's demise by reducing it to a lowly set-top black box, a task which even in death the Amiga will perform flawlessly.

Personally, I love my A1200, and I plan to keep supporting the developers that are still writing excellent software for the Amiga. I have already gotten two extremely productive years out of the machine, and computers (yes even PCs) have a pretty short life-span. I hope Escom surprises us all, and proves my above statements wrong.

Dear AC,

I've been working on computers for about fifteen years. The first computer I ever "worked" on was a Tandy TSR80. My second was Tandy COCO 3 which had a 68,000 CPU. It was a good little computer. Presently I have a Tandy 2500RSXHD 25Mhz, but in between those computers I worked with two good computers, the Commodore 128 and a Amiga 1000. Now that I look back, the C. 128 looked to have been just as good or better than the COCO 3 and the A1000 looks to be equal or better than my present Tandy 2500RSX. In some respects I wish I still had the A1000. It was a good computer. I've been trying to keep up with the Amiga/Commodore liquidation proceedings in *Amazing Computing* and in *AW*. I still enjoy looking back to that old computer. To its music capabilities and then I come back to the present and see that I had to spend \$200 to come close to matching the A1000. Then I see that I spent \$2500 for an SVGA monitor and video memory to match the video that received from a Commodore Video Monitor 1702 that I'm using for a

TV now, and it still works great. Then two extra megs of memory cost me \$100, when it would have cost twenty dollars less in some of your ads in your magazine and your buyers' guide. I want to get an Amiga again and I want to know if you can help me. I need the names, phone numbers, and addresses for the distributors in the state of Illinois, but mainly in the Springfield area. Thank you.

Christopher Maple

Mr. Hicks,

Yesterday I bought your magazine and a copy of Bytes' 20th edition. I've got an A500 and have been watching the smaller computers evolve from 4 bits until today's PC market. As you know, it's been a real dog fight and some people have enough clout to drive the North American market in circles if they wanted to. The Amiga has been more or less driven under ground. What they should do then is adopt a stance similar to National Public Broadcasting's educational, informative, but above all, quality approach to the market. It's not Christmas but this thing is a masterpiece. Thanks.

Dave Danner

Dear Sirs:

This is the first time I've written to any magazine. But I wanted to let you know I've been reading Amazing Computing for several months now, and enjoy it very much. I've looked back through your synopsis of past editions and have a question regarding information and/or lack thereof. Regarding accessing the internet using one of the faster Amigas, bits of information can be gotten word of mouth, and I've just been told of a new book.

Everyone seems to assume that everyone else out here knows exactly what to do, and how. Well I may be one of the few who are still ignorant on the subject. Every service I speak with is Mac and IBM oriented, a lot haven't even heard of the Amiga. Would it be possible for an article or series of such, regarding the subject? Perhaps entitled Internet for Idiots. Thank you for listening to my rambling, and have a nice day!

Sincerely,
George Koppert

Dear Editor,

I am a new reader of your magazine. Thanks for surviving the Commodore demise. Unfortunately, it looks like the ESCOM people

have just about the same attitude as Commodore (BOO, HISS, throw rocks) when it comes to the American market. From the few interviews and comments I've read, it looks like Amiga has died a slow and inglorious death. There is no evidence that ESCOM has any serious intent towards the American market, and if they do take an interest, it will be only for the latest products.

I probably would not have bought an Amiga, but the Video Toaster I was interested in could not be packaged in any other format at the time. I bought one a couple of years ago, completely unaware that Commodore was nearly dead and the fact that Newtek is good at lying and distorting the truth about their product. The salesperson deliberately failed to inform me that the system would be obsoleted within days because they were going to introduce the Toaster 4000. Stung by Newtek, abandoned by Commodore, I ended up with an unsupported system and it only cost me almost \$6,000 (now worth about \$500 on the used market if only I could find a sucker). My whole bank account was gone. It took a long while to realize exactly what was going on and by that time, it was too late to back out. I would have sued the box house that unloaded this junk on me, but I couldn't afford the legal fees for inter-state suit. Stuck with an Amiga 2000 but determined to get the most from this system.

I didn't feel too bad after cooling off for a year or so until now. I caught the Internet fever and tried to get access. HA! I bought an expensive modem (Supra) and "communications" software, TERMITE (\$379.69 for modem and software!!! How is it that salespeople can spot me as a sucker?). Internet, here I come. Wrong. It seems the "telecommunications" software is fine if all you want to do is call an Amiga BBS, but as far as getting onto the "information superhighway" this was a wrong turn. I might as well have driven off the end of the pier.

The reason I write is that the Oregon Research folks (TERMITE) suggestively imply that their product is intended for internet use and nothing could be farther from the truth. The first line on the outside of their package states a question, "Afraid of becoming roadkill on the Information Superhighway?" This has implications that the product could be used for accessing the Internet. The reality is that the product does not, cannot and will not access the Internet and they give no hint as to this fact. They totally avoid and ignore informing the purchaser that their product is bulletin board specific that the internet is 100% IBM (Microsoft) format with no Amiga support available by ANY of the internet companies, Compuserve, America Online, etc.

I have noted that it does look like there are a few people (out of literally millions) doing things on the Internet with Amigas, but their software is not available unless you are one of their elite and exclusive group.

Good luck in the future, you are going to need all you can get. If I didn't have so much hard earned cash invested in this system, I would retire it as a boat anchor. Hell, I still may.

Roderick L. "Rod" Schmidt

Greetings:

Congratulations on your acquisition of the Amiga technology. It is good that you have recognized the unique potential of this platform; a combination of hardware and software which yield a blend of power and ease of use claimed by other competitors, but as yet unequaled in the marketplace. It was with great excitement that I read the news of Escom's plans for the Amiga in the July issue of Amazing Computing. It was with a great degree of dismay that I read of your dismissal of the North American market in the August issue.

I am 38 years old, married, with five children, each of which has grown up on Amiga computers. I have a Bachelor of Science degree in Computer Engineering, and a Master of Science degree in Computer Science. I bought my first Amiga in 1985 (A1000), to work on my Masters degree, selecting it above the Apple Macintosh. I bought my second Amiga in 1990 (A3000); and at that time still considered it the best hardware/software combination on the market. Both machines continue to serve in my household to this date. Now it is 1995, and I am in the market for a new, more powerful machine. I would prefer it to be an Amiga.

There are a few persons in this country who have not either seen or used an IBM PC clone. Many of my friends own one. If you look at the statistics, you will see that there are millions of them in homes and businesses across the United States. It would seem to be a very popular machine. But statistics do not tell the whole story. Many of the people I talk to are dissatisfied to one degree or another with their PC clones. Although they have improved in the last ten years, they are still not easy to use. There are problems with hardware and software compatibility, the interface is not as intuitive as it should be, and things just don't mesh well. Windows '95 is supposed to address many of the problems, but it introduces problems of its own; it requires a more powerful processor, more RAM, more hard drive space, and the replacement of existing

peripheral cards for the new “plug and play” capability to work properly. This may be fine for businesses, who regularly upgrade equipment and can write off the expense, and technonerds who will buy the latest and greatest regardless, but for the common person who uses their machine at home, this upward cycle is unsustainable. These people have many expenses, and a new computer every few years or so just isn't in the budget. I know many people who are still operating 286/386 systems at home. These machines will not support Windows '95. They need a less expensive alternative.

Windows '95 is a pig. From what I have read in the journals (I still haven't actually seen a working copy on a machine), the minimum configuration suggested by Microsoft is inadequate to do much of anything except run Windows '95. The consensus seems to be that I would need a fast 486 (preferably a Pentium) class CPU, 8 Mb of RAM (preferably 16 Mb), and a lot of hard drive space, as Windows '95 alone takes up around 60 Mb. And for what? For the same capability that I have on my Amiga 1000 which I purchased 10 years ago? The Amiga OS takes up about 2.5 Mb on my hard drive, and will run on the machine I purchased 10 years ago (OK, it's slower than a Pentium, but you can't even attempt the same thing with Windows '95, and it does work). Incidentally, I am running AmigaDOS 2.1, with 2.5 Mb RAM, 40 Mb hard drive on my A1000. I would like to upgrade to 3.1 at a later date, but right now I can't justify the upgrade expense. In addition, my software applications take up vastly less hard drive space than do Windows counterparts. Part of this may be due to more options, but a lot of it has to do with how AmigaDOS is designed, and how the Amiga hardware works. The point is, this machine is much more pocketbook friendly to the consumer in the long run, and is much easier to use. You do not need a computer science degree to operate an Amiga. In fact, I have had PC users tell me “My PC is powerful, I can get a lot done with it. But it isn't fun. Your Amiga is fun to use.”

In the past ten years, I have sold at least 10-15 machines for Commodore International, simply by talking to my friends and showing them my computers. To this date, people continue to be amazed by the ease of use and power of my Amigas. I have, in the last year, had several ask me where I found them and how they could get one. They were even more amazed when I told them that my newest machine was five years old, and had a clock speed of only 16 MHz. It can do things that their 486 systems can't do, and is much easier to use. After ten years, most Americans have still never heard of the Amiga, much less ever seen or used one.