

Why is this magazine so late?

Happy Holidays?

This issue was originally our December issue when, way back in November, we received some especially hot inside information that the sale of Commodore was imminent. Since imminent means any moment now in my vocabulary and since I believed my source (and still do, it wasn't his fault), we held the issue back a few extra days for the final announcement. Except the announcement did not come.

No Room at the Inn

After our new, self-appointed deadline had passed, I drew in a breath, let out a sigh, and called my printer, "Sorry we are late. The films should be on your desk this coming Tuesday."

Quietly, from the other end of the line came a softened version of my printer's rep's voice, "When you missed your date, we had to reschedule and I just discovered that you are not on the current schedule list."

There was no press time in November or December. In fact the first press time we could get was the second week of January. We had never had this problem before. Sure, we had missed dates and we had always been able to reschedule. With AC we always try to get the latest news. This effort continually places us on the dangerous edge of any schedule.

Our rep continued, "The holidays always cause a problem because we lose so much time to the actual holidays and we cannot schedule our normal overtime. Also every year, in December, we begin the catalogs for the mail order houses which mail by mid-January. With the postal increases coming January 1, all of the mail order catalogs have been pushed up and are already scheduled."

"Is that all?" I had a feeling it wasn't.

"No, most of the catalogs have increased their runs because of the increase in the economy. We have also seen an increase in our other magazines with increased ad pages."

I guess that last was the cruelest blow of all. Because, while the rest of the industry was accelerating, the Amiga market was still on hold.

Another Imminent Sale

Today is the last chance I have of writing anything for this issue and whatever I write will be confined to this single page. It is Thursday, January 12. Last Tuesday, I spoke with Franklyn Wilson, the trustee in charge of selling the Amiga technology and the rest of Commodore's remaining assets. He told me that a sale would be announced relatively soon. He expressed regret that the sale had taken so long, but he restated that, when dealing with a multinational company like Commodore, it takes a great deal of time to completely satisfy all parties.

Since my talk with Mr. Wilson, I have spoken to Mr. Proudfoot (an associate of David Pleasance) in the UK and Mr. Amor at CEI. Each has assured me that they have high expectations of winning the bid and producing Amigas. Yet, if either won the technology today, they would not be able to take possession until mid February or even the first of March. No one still has a clear idea of the status of inventories and responsibilities in the Philippines and elsewhere. Even if everything runs smoothly, it could take several more months before Amigas would once again be seen at a neighborhood dealer.

What To Do Until The Amiga Comes

In the depression of the 1930's, thousands of people lost everything they owned, no one could get work, and the economy ground to a halt. Some believe it was started by wildcat investments with no backing that eventually fell through and collapsed the stock market. But, the real tragedy of the depression was not how it began, but how it continued.

Even though some people had limited money, they held on to it. They would not invest. No one could take a chance. Things were too scary. If you spent a dime of cold-hard cash, you were likely never to see it again. It was best to wait until things got better before you spent your money.

I know I have oversimplified the problem, but generally people were frightened. They acted like rabbits caught in the middle of the road, at night, with a pair of headlights racing toward them. All they could do was stare back with their red gleaming eyes and wait. They were frozen by their own fears and held by their instinct.

Today's Amiga market is no better. At AC, we have seen a variety of new product announcements. Yet, when asked about advertising or promotion, most developers want to wait to see what happens to the Amiga before they invest their money. It doesn't matter that they have spent time and effort creating a product. They have decided to leave their product to the whims of the marketplace.

Anyone in the Amiga market knows how well this marketing plan works. Commodore used it for the past nine years to promote the Amiga. It did not work then and it will not work now. However, these developers will not assume it is their lackluster attempt at promotion that killed their product, they will assume it is the Amiga market. Isn't this what Commodore executives believed about the North American market--they did not fund advertising or marketing, did not sell many Amigas, and then promptly reported that the North American market was not viable.

Let's be honest, the Amiga market is not all peaches and cream. There has not been an Amiga produced since April and it looks like

there will not be any new machines for several months (the exact time differs on who you speak to and what they believe the existing parts inventory is like). This means no new users.

Current Amiga users are also becoming disenfranchised. They see low cost Pentium computers and 486 machines on the market which receive a huge amount of software and product support.

So, While Amiga users are being drawn away, Amiga developers seem to believe they should sit and wait. This is why Amazing has not released a new *AC's GUIDE*. After polling nearly every Amiga vendor, nearly 70% of the requested that we either not put any listing information in for them or severely edit their listing until after the Commodore sale. They want to know where the market is before they will commit.

Opposite Thinking

Recently, I was talking to a developer who offers an 800 number. "My 800 number bill one month was \$4000. It was not for things we made. People wanted help with their Amigas and they had no other place to go." The problem was not just the cost for the 800 number, it also included the cost of the technician who was assisting the caller.

In retrospect, the answer is obvious. If there is such a need for this service, then offer it as a charge for people who really need it. This will keep anyone away who is not serious while allowing people who need the help access to professional assistance. It can provide both a revenue stream and a service.

Fighting Apathy

On the next page, is a questionnaire. This is our effort to get your ideas in writing so that we can forward them to the new buyer (or even the current bidders if these delays continue) so that they can have feedback from Amiga users on what they need, want, and expect from the new Amiga owners.

Contact a few Amiga developers. Explain why you like their products and what you want to see from them in the future. You would be surprised what a few letters and well placed telephone calls could accomplish.

There is a lot more I want to say, but time and space are running short. We at AC will continue to bring you information and market coverage, but we will also need to address the changing Amiga market and all of the other things that are going on in the Amiga world.

Now, since I have heard from several sources that the sale should happen by Friday, should I wait. No, I don't think so.

Sincerely,