

A close look at utilities to edit your Amiga's memory or clean your floppy drives, plus three games from shareware authors.

Starting this month, PD Update will list file sizes in addition to all the other usual program information. This is an important consideration with larger files, since costs can accumulate quickly when downloading them with slower modems.

The programs mentioned here are usually obtained from Aminet (ftp.wustl.edu:pub/aminet) or FUNET (ftp.funet.fi:pub/amiga) on the Internet. They also should be available via various other sources such as online services (Portal, Delphi, etc.) or BBSs. Some of them eventually appear in the Fred Fish Collection too. Unless otherwise noted, they work with all Amigas and 1.3+.

### Amiga Boulder Dash 1.1909 (donationware, \$20; 2.04+) by Jeff Bevis

Aminet: /game/misc/abdash11909.lha (261K)

Amiga Boulder Dash brings another classic game into the modern age. In Amiga Boulder Dash, you must collect a specified number of diamonds from each cave before moving on to the next. Hazards in the 2D caves include boulders (hence the name), butterflies, fireflies, and expanding amoebas among others. The

game is not as shallow as it sounds, as you really have to be careful; your movements can easily produce chain reaction consequences. Also, you'll often need to use the hazards to your advantage. Convenient cave codes prevent the frustration of starting from the beginning every time you play.

If you get tired of the 79 caves supplied in three sets, you can make your own (or modify existing ones) with the integrated cave editor. This wonderful, OS-compliant utility is clearly one of the easiest, most useful level editors ever to grace a freely distributable game. It gives you an enormous amount of control over level creation, even allowing you to test caves during development.

The audiovisual aspects are both faithful to the original and improved for the Amiga, although there are no AGA enhancements. While the game should run on all 1MB 2.04+ Amigas, a hard disk and faster CPU make it much more enjoyable. System friendliness is another one of ABD's strong points. The only problem I found was that the keyboard functions (pause, quit, etc.) sometimes don't work. I'm surprised something so obvious escaped correction; ABD hasn't been updated in well over a year. Anyway, it doesn't spoil this otherwise superior Boulder Dash clone.



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## AZap 2.20 (2.04+)

by Denis Gounelle

Aminet: /disk/moni/AZap\_v220.lha (63K)

One of the latest binary editors for the Amiga, AZap allows you to manipulate files, memory, and disk devices. For each item to be edited, AZap opens a window displaying a block of up to 512 bytes in both hexadecimal and ASCII formats, and the number of windows is limited only by free memory. A VCR-style icon panel complete with keyboard shortcuts makes moving among blocks as simple as moving within a block.

AZap also includes things you might expect in this type of program. You can search for (but not replace) bytes or text strings, fully or partially undo changes, get information on a block, as well as print, save, and fill a block. And there are handy safety features like a read-only mode and an automatic backup copy. One other notable feature is the ability to move through a disk's directory/file structure by jumping links. Unfortunately, this seems to be just partially implemented, because you can neither go up and down directory levels nor go backwards through the links.

With a clean, modern design and a good feature set, AZap certainly proves to



be one of the better binary editors available. Besides a more comprehensive way to traverse a disk's structure, I would also like to see AZap identify fields within directory blocks, not only the block type.

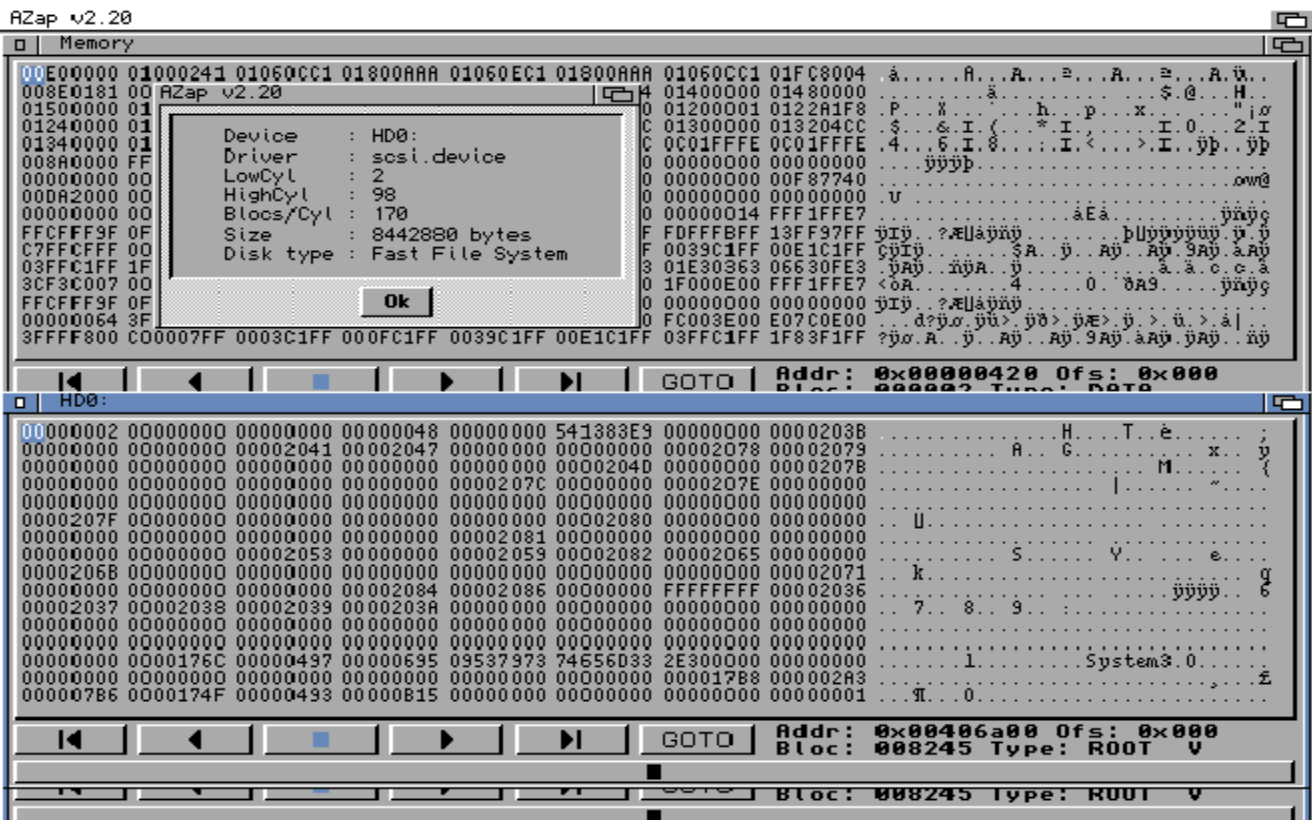
## StarWoids (shareware, \$15)

by Kift-Crawford-Wells

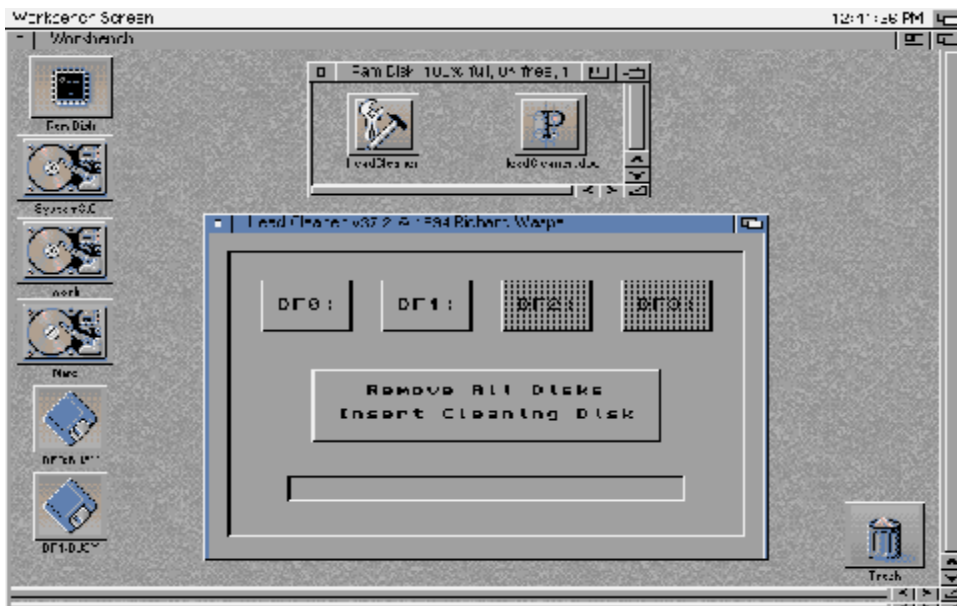
Aminet: /game/misc/StarWoids1.lha

(377K) StarWoids2.lha (459K)

Since its release in July, StarWoids has generated quite a bit of interest online - for



AZap, by Dennis Gounelle, allows you to manipulate files, memory, and disk devices. AZap's interface displays a block of up to 512 bytes in both hexadecimal and ASCII formats for each device.



**HeadCleaner and an inexpensive cleaning kit can greatly reduce errors on your floppy drives.**

good reason. Mostly based on Asteroids with a Star Wars theme (name changed for obvious legal reasons), this game casts you as a Rebel X-Wing fighter pilot. Your job is essentially to rescue fellow soldiers from such memorable places as Hoth and Endor, while fighting off enemies from the evil Empire. The X-Wing behaves much like the ship in Asteroids, so you need to be aware of your direction, thrust, momentum, and gravity to successfully maneuver around the 2D terrain. And rescuing people requires careful vertical landings.

Undoubtedly part of StarWoids' appeal is how its implementation, which features excellent graphics and sounds (especially the theme music), captures the magic of the Star Wars movies. Yet the movie tie-in doesn't eclipse the game's playability. The unregistered, 3-level demo version is fun and extremely challenging, although the registered version (when completed) should be easier. That version promises improvements including many more levels, raytraced animations, and AGA graphics.

Despite the lack of multitasking, StarWoids remains system friendly, running on all Amigas with at least 1MB RAM. System requirements can be reduced by disabling the music and title animation. My one quibble is that you can only see the entire game screen by first booting your computer in PAL mode. Recommended for all Amiga gamers, not just Star Wars fans.

### **BACMAN (shareware, \$10; AGA)**

by Freddy Krysztofiak

Aminet: /game/misc/bacman.lha (490K)

As you may have guessed from its name, BACMAN is a take on PacMan, the most famous video game ever. Not just another mediocre clone, BACMAN is the first and only Amiga PacMan game featuring beautiful 256-color AGA graphics. The visuals are accompanied by great music and sound effects. The price for all this is a huge 1.3MB executable that must fit in CHIP RAM, but there's no more disk access after it finishes loading.

If you're familiar with PacMan, you essentially know how BACMAN works. Your objective is to collect all the little dots scattered around a maze while avoiding the bad guys intent on killing you. Of course there are the requisite "power pills" and

bonuses. BACMAN provide 18 levels of dot-collecting action, complete with different mazes, enemies, and special effects to add some variety.

All the addictiveness of the original PacMan is still here. BACMAN is more difficult however, as the enemies continue to move around after you eat them, rather than temporarily returning to a home base. It's also very easy to get caught while turning a corner in a maze. The game isn't too system friendly either. You must use a PAL screen mode before running it, it doesn't multitask, and you must reboot the system to quit. Nevertheless, BACMAN remains a high-quality, fun game.

### **HeadCleaner 37.2 (2.04+)**

by Richard Waspe

Aminet: /disk/misc/headcleaner372.lha (9K)

While modern floppy drives are very reliable, frequent use can result in a build up of contaminants (dirt, dust, magnetic oxides, etc.) on the read/write heads. This might lead to disk errors or - even worse - lost data. Though these dangers aren't as extreme as some people think, it's still a good idea to clean the heads every now and then. All it takes is an inexpensive cleaning kit and a small utility such as HeadCleaner.

HeadCleaner opens a window with four floppy drive gadgets and a progress bar. First apply some cleaning solution to your cleaning disk, insert it into the desired drive, and click on a drive gadget. The program then steps the heads across the spinning disk for 20 seconds so that the cleaning surface is used evenly. Simple and effective best describe HeadCleaner.

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