

Amiga Technologies In The United Kingdom

As part of their efforts to bring the Amiga back as a "world power" computer, Amiga Technologies held a major event in London. On August 16th, Amiga Technologies held a press conference for the English Amiga magazines as well as that nation's general press. This effort was followed on the morning of August 17th with a UK dealer's meeting and in the afternoon of the same day with a developer's meeting.

The meetings, held at the Sheraton Heathrow Hotel, were also a launching pad for the introduction of the Virtual I-Glasses by Denis Pemiski of Virtual Products, as well as a platform for the new Commodore brand multimedia PCs. Although we were not contacted in time to attend (actually we were informed that there would not be anything of interest for a North American magazine because this was strictly geared for the UK distribution), we were fortunate enough to have a press kit sent to us via e-mail.

Petro Tyschtschenko

In Mr. Tyschtschenko's prepared speech, he began, "Some of you surely know how long and difficult the takeover of Commodore was and how much this one year of latency hurt the Amiga market. Building up everything again was also a difficult task for us. Especially the financial and logistic situation. Without the support from our mother company ESCOM AG, nothing would have been possible. We actually revived the Amiga in two important steps: First by acquiring the assets of the former Commodore for more than 10 million dollars, and secondly by starting it up again, which requested again several times the initial investment. Other main difficulties we encountered were to get specific parts and components for production. D-RAMs are on allocation, Amiga keyboards, floppies and SCSI hard drives have long lead times. Tailor made parts are difficult to get and they cost more than in the old Commodore times."

"Our first objective was to get Amiga products back on the market as fast as possible. To achieve this goal in an acceptable time, we decided to build the A1200 and A4000T without modifications. We have however included the new version 3.1 of the Operating System for the A1200."

Mr. Tyschtschenko went on to state that the Amiga 4000 Tower should be considered a new product. According to Mr. Tyschtschenko, there were only 200 of the units originally produced by Commodore. He warned that the design changes and

enhancements were not performed so that the computer would be available for this year. "This decision does not mean in any way that we are going to stop research and development. Enhancements will be made on current machines for sure."

Mr. Tyschtschenko also announced that the ESCOM shops in the UK will carry Amiga Computers. "The employees in these shops used to sell Amigas and we want to use their store traffic again. This will be an excellent additional sales tool to spread Amigas in the UK."

Mr. Tyschtschenko again noted the problems in North America, "We already have installed a dealer network but are still looking for a potential distributor. Somebody who is willing to support and invest in our product. We are actually looking for a partner more than just a distributor."

There was good news in production. The Amiga is still on schedule for delivery at the latter part of September. The A4000T in the US and the A1200 which will be produced in Bordeaux, France. On the A1200, Mr. Tyschtschenko stated, "Our successful negotiations with Solectron, one of the world leaders of sub-contract manufacturing, guarantees a European high quality standard. Quality is very important for us, we want to reduce defective returns to a minimum. That's why we focused on Europe rather than Far-East."

While the Amiga 4000T motherboards will be produced in the United States, near Philadelphia, the units for Europe will be assembled in the ESCOM facilities in Germany. In addition, Amiga Technologies has also made an agreement with a European monitor manufacturer to provide a monitor especially adapted for the Amiga. According to Mr. Tyschtschenko, the monitor is a high-quality multisync unit that can scan horizontal frequencies from 15 to 38 KiloHertz. The plug of that monitor is also adapted to the video output connector of the A1200 and A4000T.

Mr. Tyschtschenko also stated, "As announced at our previous press conference, our plan is still to build 100,000 A1200's and 20,000 A4000T's until the end of this year. These figures are based on existing orders and on customer based forecasts. I'm quite sure that this gives us the assurance that the whole production will actually be sold. A large percentage of our A1200 production will be sold alone in the UK."

Repair and spare servicing (for the European market) will be centralized in their service-centre in Braunschweig, Germany, in coordination with the representation points in each country. The technical dealer support will also be handled here, as well as the

distribution for computers and monitors in Germany. The service centers will not repair the units, but make components exchanges only.

Future Amiga Plans

Mr. Tyschtschenko discussed the future of the Amiga by saying, "First, we plan to enhance current models. We are thinking of faster processors and chip integration for the beginning. We are going to integrate the 68060 chip for the A4000T this year. For the entry-level model, we are looking at an external CD ROM addition and more RAM onboard the bare units." Unfortunately no decision has yet been made on which RISC platform will be used as a basis for a future Amiga.

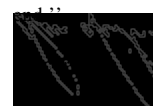
Mr. Tyschtschenko continued to stress Amiga Technologies' desire to use the CD 32 platform for the development of set-top-box systems for cable-TV, satellite-TV and for telephone line communication as well as home-shopping and home-banking. "I'm convinced that this market is tremendous and will push the Amiga technology into millions of households. Software publishers should be interested in writing software for such a widely spread platform. The Amiga architecture is optimally suited for set-top-systems because of its low demand for resources like RAM or processor power and because of its multitasking and real-time abilities, in summary, the Amiga is the most cost effective platform for set-top-boxes."

International Funkausstellung (IFA) Berlin

From August 26th to September 3rd, ESCOM will be present at the IFA, one of the biggest consumer fairs in Germany for TV, communications, and multimedia. With 500,000 attendees expected, they will use the show for an Amiga comeback in Europe.

Conclusions

From the above information, it is apparent that Amiga Technologies still wants to move the Amiga technology forward, although a little slower than any of us would like. The idea that distribution is still not complete in the US and that the numbers on the A4000 tower have been altered down by 5,000 units causes some concern, but I am willing to be patient. As Margaret Thatcher said, "I am extraordinarily patient provided I get my own way in the end."



Don Hicks
Managing Editor