Amiga Mail News

The Amiga 600

At the CeBit computer fair held last March in Germany, Commodore previewed the Amiga 600, the new consumer-level Amiga model. It takes advantage of several technologies not previously seen in the Amiga line.

The A600 is much smaller than the A500 thanks to Surface Mount Technology and smaller casework. Surface Mount Technology (SMT) makes it possible to reduce the size of the motherboard, lowering cost while at the same time increasing the reliability of the circuitry. There is only one socketed IC on the A600, the Kickstart ROM.

The A600 has a smaller keyboard than its cousin the A500. The A600 keyboard contains all the QWERTY-style keyboard keys and the function keys. The major difference is that the A600 keyboard lacks a numeric keypad.

This new Amiga contains either one or two surface-mounted, 256Kx16 DRAMs which give the A600 either 512K or 1 Megabyte of RAM. The A600 can handle up to a total of 2MB of RAM internally with the help of an internal add-on called the A601. The A601 also contains a battery backed-up real time clock.

The A600 contains a surface mounted ECS chip set. The A600 can take advantage of all of the display modes available in higher end Amiga systems like the A3000. This includes the 31 KHz Productivity mode, although this mode requires an appropriate monitor. Also, with an A601 installed, the A600 can address up to two Megabytes of Chip RAM.

Because the A600 is a consumer-oriented product, it contains some connectors to allow the user to connect it to a TV or video equipment. The Amiga 600 has an RF modulator built into it. It also has color composite video out. Both of these connectors are in the form of standard RCA jacks.

One major addition the A600 introduces to the low-end Amiga is a built-in hard drive interface. The A600 has a connector for an internal Integrated Drive Electronics (IDE) hard drive. IDE hard drives, which are commonly found in laptop PCs, use very little power and are only 2.5" tall. There is enough space inside the A600 to house one of these drives. Installing an IDE drive requires either a ROM upgrade kit or a software loaded IDE device driver.

The A600 comes with a special version of the operating system software, 2.05. The 2.05 ROM for the A600 contains drivers for the A600's PCMCIA credit card connector. This new connector is compatible with the PCMCIA/JEIDA standard for ‘‘Memory Card’’ devices. The PCMCIA connector supports credit-card sized memory and I/O cards.

This 68 pin PCMCIA 2.0 connector has many possible uses. Game programmers and other application programmers can design applications which run, in place, from PCMCIA standard ROM cards. Using an appropriate memory card, the user can add up to four Megabytes of RAM to the system. Using this same type of card and a special version of CrossDOS, the user can share data with other machines that support PCMCIA, like the HP95XL Palmtop computer.

The PCMCIA spec is available to registered developers through CATS US. Check your developer support material price lists for this item. There are also some industry magazines which deal exclusively with memory card devices. One such publication is ‘‘Memory Card Systems and Design’’, 6300 S. Syracuse, Suite 650, Englewood, CO, 80111-9912. CATS will also be providing some tools and examples for Amiga XIP (execute-in-place) credit card software.

If you have a software product on the Amiga market that is not Release 2.0 compatible, get an upgrade out there that is compatible. As the entire installed base of Amigas shifts to Release 2.0 (both new Amiga models and old), any product that isn't Release 2.0 compatible essentially will be rendered worthless. Any developers that are wondering when they start developing specifically for Release 2.0, the answer is *right now*.

At this time Commodore is not marketing the A600 in the United States.

Hirsch and Wolf are in Business

European Amiga developers can now buy developer materials directly from Germany. CATS Europe has established a European-wide service via Hirsch & Wolf in Germany, where developers can order articles from CATS official material list.

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When is the Next DevCon?

CATS is making plans for the next Amiga Developers Conference. Although the plans aren't finalized yet, we did want to let you know that CATS is planning the next conference for January, 1993. There are several reasons for picking a January date, which we will make clear once all the arrangements have been made.

So, be assured that CATS is working on the next conference, and it will be in a location as interesting (or more so) than our previous DevCons!