



# Workbench

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Contributions can be soft copy (on 3½" disk) or hard copy. It will be returned if requested and accompanied with a self-addressed envelope.

The editor of the Amiga Users Group Inc. newsletter *Workbench* retains the right to edit contributions for clarity and length.

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Newsletter produced by



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It's May and the leaves are turning golden shades of yellow and red. While we are enjoying Autumn here in Australia the Northern Hemisphere is in the grip of Spring and Summer is fast approaching and with it Daylight savings. This can only mean good things for the Amiga and the forthcoming release of Amiga OS 3.5. With the improving weather the programmers will be feeling more happy within themselves and this should lead to more productive programming. Heh! – It's a theory nothing more, nothing less! One can only hope that it's true and that Amiga OS 3.5 lives up to the hype we are hearing about on the web.

This is my second-last newsletter and has been produced at very short notice as I'm going interstate later this month. Once again I would like to thank James for the previous newsletter (a colour edition – how can I compete with that!).

Tony Heeren

## Framework for a Digital Vision

You're 17 years old and you've been working for a year. Your job is to select and purchase a few \$100,000 video editing PCs and learn how to operate them. Imagine being twice that age, and building an entire video-production company around a short bit of cable the size of your shoelace known as an IEEE 1394 or Firewire.

Meet Paul Meredith, from DMC Digital, and Ronald Barkoczy from Empire Films – part of a growing band of PC-powered video professionals on the digital frontier. "Think about Walt Disney's *Tron*, the first computer-generated special effects film," said Barkoczy from his comfortable timber-panelled editing suite, located a stone's throw from Caulfield racecourse.

"It was all wire-frame stuff costing millions of dollars and computer hours to produce – done with a whole room full of machines the size of my studio. Now you can produce better effects on your home PC."

"(Cheaper) Computers are affording amateurs with equipment only the professionals used to have."

Barkoczy should know. At the ripe old age of 31, he's a PC digital video veteran, being part of the emerging industry from its conception less than a decade ago.

"It was in the early '90s I discovered I could capture video stills on my Amiga – that I could paint them and pull them apart."

"I thought: 'Wouldn't it be great if I could do this with moving video' – along with about a million others."

"And some very smart people within that million were developing the software and hardware to do it."

So as PC-based digital video took its first steps, Barkoczy was there, learning in the school of hard-knocks.

And wherever the analogue and digital worlds collide in convergence, hard-won experience is everything.

There are few textbooks or university courses blazing a trail through this digital frontier. They're still writing them.

That's why Sydney-based Meredith decided to ditch years 11 and 12 to work in the new industry instead - to get a genuine edge of experience.

"In this industry, most people have started out at the bottom and worked their way up," Meredith said, without a hint of defensiveness. "That's how it works. So I weighed up two years' experience against getting my HSC."

"As far as employers go, they would look at my experience rather than my HSC in this industry."

But is Meredith being a little hasty, trying to catch the digital video wave before gaining a more formal educational grounding?

While he was starting primary school in Sydney, Barkoczy was chasing his dreams in Melbourne, doing a string of film and television courses at RMIT and Swinburne University of Technology.



**Meeting – 16th May**

This month's meeting Tony Mulvihill will demonstrate DOpus Magellan II and the AmiNet utility FBlit which increases the graphic capability of any Amiga without a graphics card.

**Forthcoming Meetings**

If you can help with ideas for our monthly meetings please contact a committee member.

**June 20:** Next club meeting.

**July 18:** No plans as yet!

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# FBlit 2.63 – Use Less Chip RAM and Speed Up Your Graphics for FREE!

FBlit patches some OS functions that normally use the blitter, such that they can use the CPU, and consequently may function outside chip mem.

The patched functions are also faster and will suffer less from colour flicker on non-interleaved data.

In addition, it can force non-displayable bitmaps to be allocated in fast memory for named tasks.

FBlit will effect most OS programmes to some extent, but some are specifically targeted. By default these are 'IBrowse', 'AWeb', 'IPrefs' (responsible for WorkBench backgrounds) and a few other bits and pieces. It also allows 'NewIcons' to be used in RTG mode.

How much effect FBlit can have depends on your configuration. For instance, if you use a 4 colour PAL hires WorkBench, you may notice very little change, but if you use a 256 colour PAL hires-laced WorkBench with NewIcons, window patterns and a full screen backdrop image you certainly should notice the difference. It also depends on the speed of your processor and to a large extent on how FBlit is set up (most significantly for day to day use, whether you started it after WorkBench, or in your startup-sequence).

FBlit appears to function perfectly on the majority of systems, but it can never be 100% compatible. There is much scope for problems. Other software that patches the same functions as FBlit may cause trouble. MCX, MCP, CPUBlit, NewIcons etc... This applies to RTG software as well ie. CGX and P96. FBlit is fairly pointless and unlikely to function with RTG systems, especially if a gfx card is used. Although, several people have found that running FBlit with CGXAGA covers up some of the bugs in that, but it is then very tricky to figure out what is happening when things do go wrong.

There still may be some trouble with gadget hacks like MCP's SYSIHACK. This problem seemed to fix itself with a newer MCP, but apparently came back again later?!

On the subject of MCP, you may want to turn off it's QuickDraw patch.

There is a problem with dragged RTG NewIcons corrupting the screen on some systems. This bug is rather rare, requiring you to drag

several icons around for a while before it happens... Lovely! The only known cure for this just now is to set FDrawGList() to use the CPU for chip data, but that is horribly slow with the current blitter emulation.

Missing diagonal lines :) You might see (or not) a lot of those, but they are harmless. Currently, if any part of a rastport is in fast mem, the whole thing is classed as fast data. This means that things that aren't really in fast mem can have rendering operations blocked. Most common victims of this are vector border gadgets, especially the MUI dropdown menu gadget.

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**Stephen Brookes:** sbrookes@tpec.u-net.com



**FBlit In Action:** (top) Fblit disabled; (bottom) FBlit enabled. As you can see FBlit frees up Chip RAM resources to allow AWeb to display more graphics

## Benefits of the Amiga OS 3.5 Update

### Easy Internet Access

#### TCP/IP Stack

- Setup connection to your provider within minutes
- Multi user support
- Multi interface support (Internet and Ethernet)
- Latest Socks v4/5 client module for firewalls
- Enhanced SANA II support for fast transfer rates

#### WWW Browser with Offline/Online support

- Browse the OS 3.5 documentation and the Internet

#### New Cross-Application E-mail Library

- General API for sending and receiving of E-mails

#### New E-Mail Client

- Based on the E-mail library

### Support for Hard Disks > 4 GB

#### NSD Patch

- New standard for 64 Bit Devices
- Updated Info, Format, Diskcopy and FFS

#### New HDToolBox

The low-level library processes the following tasks

- Scanning the SCSI bus
- Read the physical information of the hard disk
- Read/write the logical information (RDB)
- Create Mount files
- Read special Mount entries to restore the RDB
- HDToolBox application uses the low-level library
- New GUI style

### Modern Graphical User Interface

#### New Icon Set (Glow Icons)

- New complete icon set for all system tools
- New icons for most applications

#### New Icon Library

- Icons with up to 256 colors
- Automatic color adaptation
- NewIcon compatible
- Compatible to OS 3.1 icons
- New API functionality (updated)
- Faster and more robust (updated)

#### New BOOPSI Library

- New complete set of powerful BOOPSI gadgets
- Very fast, modular and scalable
- AmigaOS compatible implementation

- Compatible to existing BOOPSI classes

#### New Resource Library

- Loads and manages all GUI resources
- Change GUI without recompilation of application
- Can be used with any programming language

#### New GUI editor for developers

- WYSIWYG GUI editor
- Creates resource files that are used by the new resource library
- Automatic localization of the application

#### Updated & Enhanced Workbench

- More responsive user interface (new)
- Progress requester for copy/delete (new)
- Enhanced information requester (new)
- Smart display update (new)
- New keyboard control functionality (new)
- New API functionality (new)

### Extensive CD-ROM Support

#### Cache CDFS

- ISO9660, RockRidge, Joliet (Win 95/98) and MAC HFS Compatible
- Supports Amiga protection bit and file comments
- MultiSession CD-ROM support

#### New PlayCD

- Audio player for SCSI and ATAPI CD-ROM drives
- Low memory consumption

#### New CDFSPrefs

- CacheCDFS preferences for *on the fly* configuration

### Full Printer Support

#### New Printer Device


- Drivers for all common printers
- PowerPC support
- New functions to print all kinds of bitmaps
- New API to define page size and page break correctly
- Support for 24 bit Picasso96 DumpRastPort command
- TurboPrint compatible functions to print 8 Bit chunky and 16/24 bit bitmaps

#### New Printer Preferences

- Updated for new GUI style




## Power PC Support

-  New WarpUP PowerPC Support
  - AmigaOS compatible integration
  - Extensive functionality
  - Hardware independent driver, easy to extend

## New Preferences

- Updated for new GUI style

## HTML Documentation

-  New Comprehensive Instructions
  - Reworked documentation for Workbench, DOS, ARexx and Harddisk
  - Completion of all the new features of AmigaOS 3.5
  - Extensive illustrations
  - Bilingual English/German

## Bug Fixes

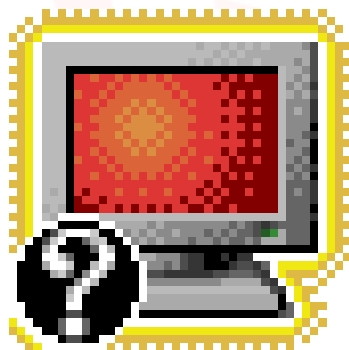
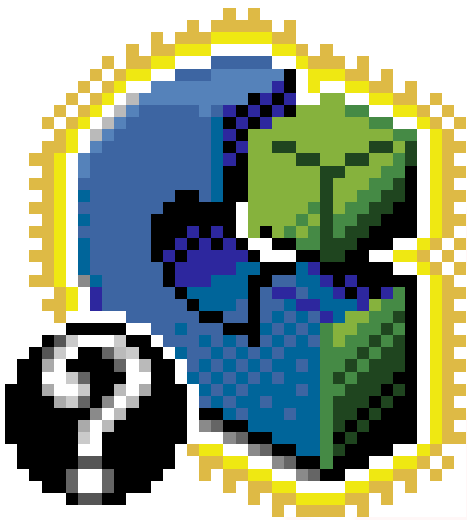
- Corrections to improve overall robustness and to fix long-standing bugs (updated)
- Reworked A2024 monitor driver
- Reworked CLI command (Join, Status, Type)
- Reworked IPrefs command (more robust, better Workbench pattern support) (new)
- Reworked LoadWB (new)

## Enhancements

- Updated asl.library (more responsive, faster, enhanced user interface, more robust) (updated)
- Updated DataTypes (updated)
- 8svx.datatype (now supports stereo sound playback; faster and more robust)
- amigaguide.datatype / amigaguide.library (faster, new API functionality)
- anim.datatype (now supports all major IFF-ANIM formats; more robust)
- animation.datatype (now supports stereo sound playback; more robust; new API functionality; RTG compatible)
- ascii.datatype (faster and more robust)
- cdxl.datatype (now supports stereo sound playback; more robust)
- ilbm.datatype (now supports true color pictures; more robust)
- picture.datatype (now supports true color pictures, dithering and color quantization; more robust, new API functionality; RTG compatible)
- sound.datatype (now supports stereo sound playback; more robust, new API functionality)
- text.datatype (faster and more robust)
- New DataTypes for GIF, JPEG, PNG and AIFF file format (updated)
- Updated 68040.library (faster) (new)
- Updated bullet.library (performance improvements) (updated)
- New SCSI Mount tool

## The Future (Plans and Options)

- Further releases or Add-On packages
- New reworked and extended Kickstart
- Extended PowerPC support
- New 68K Emulator for PPC-only systems
- Many new System Libraries as PPC-native



*GlowIcons*



## Victoria

### Amiga Technology Australia

17 Thompson Circuit, Mill Park, 3082 Phone: (03) 9436 5555

### Byte One Computers

24 Silverton Drive, Ferntree Gully, 3156 Phone: (03) 9752 3991 or 015 316 147

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### Software Buyers Service

Arnie Robbins  
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111 Cambridge Street, West Leederville, 6007 Phone: (08) 9388 1665

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611 Beaufort Street, Mt. Lawley, 6050 Phone: (08) 9328 9062

## Queensland

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### Synapse Computers

190 Riding Road, Hawthorne, 4171 Phone: (07) 389 9098

He also founded Empire Films back then, by mixing venerable Amiga and celluloid technologies.

But when asked for his opinion, Barkoczy motioned towards the qualifications on the wall behind his desk with mild disappointment.

"I don't want to put these courses down," he said in a low voice, "but the technology moves so quickly they were all obsolete by the time they were completed."

"In film school we were still cutting with tape and guillotines. There was nothing digital about it."

Of course, now there is some digital content in film and TV courses, but Meredith questions if people are trained with the latest gear the industry will be using by the time they finish.

Because he'd already made up his mind to specialise in digital video, Meredith is sure the big move to skip school is right.

At 17, he cannot be classed as a veteran at anything, but he's no spring chicken either.

Thanks to some handy family connections, he has hung around DMC Digital since he was 12, as well as scoring top marks in a TAFE multimedia computer course.

NOW Paul's bringing a new edge to the business, applying his natural aptitude for computers just as digital video and PC technologies converge.

(High-end digital video, until now, has been compiled using suites of expensive purpose-built machines.)

So, suddenly, Meredith has been thrust into the middle of big business deals with long-established television industry players.

One example is AMtech, which is vying for business with NEC for \$100,000 digital video PCs.

Of course, Meredith does not set DMC Digital's generous PC budget, but the decision on where it is spent is largely his.

So far, he has bought two massive PC systems from different suppliers – the latest and greatest being from AMtech.

How does he handle these seasoned negotiators? "I'm into specs and I'm very technical," Meredith said matter-of-factly.

But this is not to say Meredith can be sold on any new high-tech spiel.

Before ordering the new dual Pentium II system (Windows NT with hardware RAID SCSI disks), he flew to the United States, quizzing the system's video editing software developers about where they were taking their product.

And although Meredith's manner is both genuine and disarming, possessing a very keen mind, he's certainly no pushover.

As a technical person with experience in professional editing suites worth millions of dollars, he can tell if the latest PC upstarts have what it takes - and he thinks they do.

ON THE other hand, Barkoczy has taken a different tack with Empire Films.

Instead of doing his jobs by hiring PC editing suites from the likes of Meredith for \$250 per hour, he has built one next to his own home.

He still runs the Amiga operating system but on a souped-up Compaq/Digital Alpha machine with a German-built Draco editing system.

A thin Firewire cable connects this to a Sony Digital Video camera for direct transfers of CD quality stereo, broadcast video, (double TV station reception) plus remote tape control.

"It's quite interesting when clients come over," Ronald said.

"Buzzing the doorbell they say 'Oh no, where have I come?'" (These people are from Collins Street companies wanting their video to be produced for promotional purposes.)

"But as soon as they're in the studio they relax, because I can show them how I do the same thing without charging for an art-deco office in South Melbourne with dozens of secretaries to make it look officious."

So what are the technical differences between Barkoczy's sub-\$50,000 Amiga-Alpha hybrid, and Paul's new \$100,000 dual Pentium II babies running Windows NT?

Mainly time. Paul's machines are real-time systems, which let you view changes to your work instantaneously. Ronald often has to wait for processing to complete before he can see the results of special effects.

Quality may also come into it for really sophisticated "multigenerational" effects, because Paul's AMtech system uses virtually "lossless" Motion-JPEG, with negligible compression.

And he can do more special effects at once, having four separate video inputs to work with simultaneously.

Yet having invested less, Barkoczy is able to undercut most of his competitors.

However, there is one thing both Barkoczy and Meredith agree on. The fledgling digital video industry at all levels has a very bright future: "Red Bull, a cop drama, was made in Melbourne last year on mini-DV and blown up on 35mm film," Barkoczy said.

"So the extraordinary has happened – people are shooting feature films on an almost domestic format."

"The ultimate goal is to shoot straight on to a hard disk," Meredith said.

"They're developing a gel-based hard disk because with any motion (with today's hard disks) you're stuffed – so they've developed it so it's kind of steady."

"You'll just whack in your hard drive that's come out of a camera, and start editing (on your PC)."

"That's how speedy it will be."

Ronald Barkoczy of Empire Film's, an Amiga-based video editing company based in Caulfield, Melbourne.



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Contact James Gardiner  
9553 3826

# WANTED

## Newsletter Editor

A person is required to fill this role for the new financial year. If you have the willingness to perform this role please contact your nearest committee member.

## Amiga 4000

Cyberstorm II 060/50MHz with Cyber SCSI

Cybervision 64/3D with Scan Doubler

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**\$2700 ONO for the lot**

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Apollo A1240 040/25 + SCSI	\$ 525	Apollo A1240 040/40 + SCSI	\$ 659
Buddha EIDE Controller	\$ 149	Catweasel MkII A1200/A4000	\$ 149
Kywalda Boot Adapter	\$ 49.95	Catweasel Zorro II	\$ 225

## *Arriving Soon!*

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Dealer Enquires Welcome

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*Reader Classifieds*

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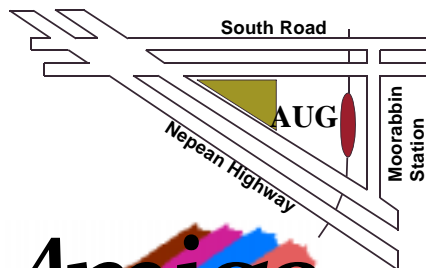
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<http://www.aug.org.au>

## Membership

The AUG Inc. membership year runs from September to August. If you are joining in:

August–September.....	\$25
October–November .....	\$21
December–January .....	\$17
February–March .....	\$13
April–May.....	\$9 or \$33
June–July .....	\$5 or \$29



## Disk and Book Library

AUG has a collection of Amiga books and magazines. Members can borrow for a period of one month. The library is available at most meetings. Programs from the public domain library are available at many meetings.

## World Wide Web Access

Chris Quonoey can provide a very competitive Internet connection to all AUG members at reduced rates from BlazeNet. Connection costs are as low as \$0.95/hr. There are no joining or monthly fees and your access time is paid for in advance. For details contact Chris (0418 377 975).

## The Dead Letter Department

The AUG's new BBS run by Craig Hutchison has access to all the latest AmiNet files as well as other goodies. Registration is free to all members. Phone: (03) 9571 7194

## Meetings

The Amiga Users Group meets at the Moorabbin Arts Centre Complex, 979 Nepean Hwy, Moorabbin (see map) on the 3rd Sunday of each month at 2:00pm. There is ample parking at the rear of the complex off South Road. Meetings are held in the "Sun Room" or on the 2nd floor (up the stairs then turn left). Ask at reception if you get lost. Cost: \$2.00 members; \$4.00 non-members. This is to cover some of the rental costs of the venue.

## Membership Form

First Name: ..... Surname: .....

Address: .....

Post Code: ..... E-mail: .....

Phone (AH): ..... Phone (BH): ..... Fax: .....

*I have enclosed a cheque or money order as outlined in the table above. Once admitted as a member of the Amiga Users Group (Vic.) Inc. I agree to abide by the rules of the association for as long as I continue to be a member.*

Signed: ..... Date: / /1999

*If joining by mail please allow 2-3 weeks for your membership to be processed.*

*(The following is optional)*

Year of Birth: ..... Amiga model(s): ..... Occupation: .....

Interests: .....

Where did you hear about AUG?: .....

What services would you like AUG to provide?: .....