

The Interface

"Taking 8-Bits Into The 21st Century"

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It's The Most Wonderful Time Of The Year!

Commodore and FCUG celebrate this special time!

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Newsletter of the Fresno Commodore User Group – Fresno, California
www.dickestel.com/fcug.htm



THE EDITOR'S GODZILLA

-by Lenard R. Roach

LOOKING TO ACCOMPLISH

From what little I have been able to gather from various sources, many users of the Commodore computer are taking an offense to my latest Commodore compilation book, "Load/Run," especially the cover which depicts various Commodore devices resting on the side of a wooden outhouse. Some readers think that I believe the Commodore is a bygone computer and deserves to be thrown into the sewer. Others believe that the back cover is very deceptive and leads the potential reader to believe that the book is something other than a Commodore book. I usually don't answer critics' comments but I feel it is necessary to explain the purpose not only of "Load/Run," but some of my other Commodore works as well.

To start off allow me to say that I'm not trying to reach just Commodore user but the general public, especially those readers who once used the Commodore and may enjoy the nostalgic trip back in time when Commodore was king and they were a part of that kingdom.

When I wrote the first book, "Run/Stop-Restore," my initial intention to reach out specifically to

the Commodore community as a whole. Last reports I got from sources, there hasn't been a Commodore book release since the late 90s or the early 2000s.* Also, all existing books about the Commodore seemed to deal with the history or functionality of the computer which, after many years, has been spoken about to the minutest detail. As a story teller and former funny man, I wanted to bring a fresh view of the Commodore from the viewpoint of the one sitting in the chair in front of the machine staring at the monitor. Rumors have reached my ears that some of the stories I had written when the Commodore User's Group of Kansas City's newsletter, "Ryte Bytes," was in existence, were being reprinted in other newsletters throughout the United States and Canada. With that in mind I thought that other Commodore users, past and present, might enjoy reading my anecdotes, too. Thus, "Run/Stop-Restore" was published by using a photocopier and bound into book form by FedEx Office. What a failure that project was! All I accomplished with this project was make a mess of my hard work and put a black eye on Commodore.

It took an evil divorce followed immediately by a severe depression to force me to try publishing again using the same stories in "Run/Stop-Restore" but choosing a real publishing company instead of trying to do things on my own. I cruised the internet looking for a publisher and stopped on the first company in the web search – Authorhouse. However, I completely forgot that vanity presses may still be in operation using the internet to lure unsuspecting authors into a contract and I fell right into their trap.

Authorhouse promised that, for \$3,000, I could have my book published and have that book be in all the big retail stores. Being the naive sucker that I was, I signed the contract and I was off to make a name for myself. With a few changes made to the manuscript by adding extra content that I found on some of my 5.25" disks, I laid the

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\$3,000 down and “Run/Stop-Restore: 10th Anniversary Edition” was on it's way. Everthing seemed to be going well until it was time to review the final product in which the publisher placed an IBM computer on the cover instead of a true Commodore machine. Without being affected by this faux pas, “Run/Stop-Restore: 10th Anniversary Edition” went to press and became, and still stands, as my personal best seller. It felt good to hit the bullseye on first shot despite a shaky launch from the bow. My mental health improved significantly.

Not wanting to break the cycle of personal success, I started to work on my second compilation book, “Shift-Ctrl/Home.” I refused to use Authorhouse again and was at a loss as to where to publish this book. My great friend in writing as well as my great rival Paul Howell from the United Kingdom, introduced me to Amazon Bookplace and KDP Publishing, a free service which demanded only sixty percent of my personal book sales in repayment for publishing books for without charge. Amazon, though, only allowed marketing done on their website. To provide marketing outside Amazon, the author would have to do it on his or her own or hire a marketing company to provide promotion. In short, even with a very restricted advertising budget, readers located and got ahold of “Shift/Ctrl-Home” and added it to their collection of Commodore tomes. At this point I realized that I wasn't doing this for money or popularity, I was receiving the mental help I needed and it was coming from both Commodore users and non-users alike by commenting on one of my books. With each quarterly royalty report I got in my email, I knew that someone was enjoying a leisurely read time with a cup of tea in one hand and my book in the other.

This brings me to “Load/Run.” This particular compilation book was specifically aimed at former Commodore users. My hope was to return

people into the Commodore universe via some light hearted reading but thus far this project was a dismal failure. I believe most of the problem lies with the fact that everyone who subscribes to a Commodore magazine has seen these stories before and can read them for free online. My steam was finally running out and there was no fresh coal in the bin to refire the flame.

In between each Commodore compilation book I wrote and released I wrote a few skit and play books for churches and Christian acting troupes to use for educating children about the Bible. I must admit personally that the Commodore community is more forgiving and understanding of blunders when it comes to bad books than the Christian community. Christians have a bad habit of shooting their own wounded instead of helping heal them. I already had to remove one Christian book from Amazon due to complaints about content. I am seeking to revamp the book, entitled “The Fourth Equinox,” and release it again soon hopefully without any hassles. Usually the “church” doesn't stop with one error when they find it and goes after all of a writer's works to persecute them undauntingly. Why? The reasons elude even me.

Nonetheless, I am at present putting together another Commodore compilation book hopefully with some new unreleased content. This one has a questionable working title but I tested the title with a few close friends who don't hold back and they seem to enjoy it. The working title: “Another Smart A** Commodore Book.” I hope to change the title before I send the manuscript to Amazon but no new title has come to mind. I hope something comes to mind soon.

* Note: Brian Bagnall released, “On the Edge,” in 2010, followed by the revised version, “Commodore: A Company on the Edge,” in 2017. Margaret Morabito released her book, “Vintage Commodore 128 Personal Computer Handbook,”

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in 2019, and Bil Herd released his book, “Back into the Storm: A Design Engineer's Story of Commodore Computers in the 1980s” in 2021.



-by Robert Bernardo & Dick Estel

NOVEMBER 2024

Members drifted in one by one on a cold November day, with the final count being just four – Robert, Dick, Dave and Bruce. The pre-lunch chatter turned to the subject of food served at home during our childhoods. This included liver, which some members liked and others wouldn't touch. The least appetizing report concerned a mom who made the entire week's school lunches on the weekend, resulting in a very soggy tuna sandwich for Friday.

The food from our Panera Bread venue was considerably better and everyone enjoyed their choices, including various sandwiches and soups.

Robert reported that his usual helpers at Commodore Los Angeles Super Show, Mario Luppi and his wife Debbie, will not attend in 2025, leaving him in need of someone to man the registration table. Bruce is willing to help for a few hours on Saturday, which should be the time during which most attendees arrive. This event will be held the last weekend of April.

Also Robert was in need of ideas for CLASS 2025. Since it would be the Amiga computer's 40th anniversary, he had thought of an exhibit of all the Amiga computers from the oldest to the newest 2024 AmigaOne. Bruce suggested that Robert send out a survey to all the Fresno and Southern California members as to what they would want in the show. (In a meet-up a few days later, Larry Anderson of the Silicon Realms BBS reminded Robert that it would be the 35th anniversary of Commodore 128. That gave Robert the idea to exhibit a flat C128, a European plastic C128D, and a metal C128DCR at CLASS.)

The club annually makes a donation to charity. This year the membership voted to donate \$50 to the Poverello House, which provides three free hot meals daily to anyone in need. This organization has served local people in need since the 1960s. (<https://poverellohouse.org/>)

One week earlier at the Southern California Commodore and Amiga Network (SCCAN) meeting, Robert met up with a gentleman who wanted to trade four Amigas big-box computers for a working Windows XP machine. Robert had one of these XP's he did not need and made the trade. When tested, none of the Amigas worked, but he sold one to a user who will do his own repairs, and Duncan MacDougall of The Other Group of Amigoids will attempt to repair the rest.

Robert then talked about various shows he has attended recently. This included the Rocklin Maker Faire at Sierra Community College, northeast of Sacramento. This event lasted just five hours and did not really focus on computers. Robert also attended the three-day Bay Area Maker Faire in Vallejo, setting up Commodore, Amiga, Tandy, and Atari computers while his table partners set up Acorn, PCjr, Silicon Graphics, Radio Shack, Apple, and Nintendo machines. Robert showed a slideshow of photos

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and videos from the both faires.

Because the slideshow and videos ran long and because the meeting was going to be adjourned relatively early, Robert rushed to show some of the oldest, primitive, commercial games from back in the day and some of the latest C64 downloads. First off were the oldest games. Magazines had reviewed them as being bad, and boy, they were bad! With Flintstones, you first saw a nicely rendered cartoon picture of the Flintstone family, but then came the game play in which you controlled Fred... but you didn't have much control over Fred. Then there was the Magic Carpet, basically a game where you had to fly past obstacles and through tunnels. However, there was no way to fly past the moving obstacles in the tunnels.

The new downloads were more entertaining. Hydrogenese, a newly-discovered and rebuilt game, was a fast-paced shooter. Iceblox had you as a penguin who moved ice blocks around the board. Then there was Orbix, which could be likened to a pinball game except you are shooting your sphere for a moving target.

As the meeting ended, we decided on the date for our next meeting. Due to schedule conflicts, the December FCUG meeting will be held on the second Sunday, December 8.

DECEMBER 2024

From Stockton 2 hours away, Robert drove through the fog and arrived to the Panera Bread venue about half an hour early. He immediately started setting up the presentation equipment. By 11 a.m., he had everything ready, and member Dave was the first to appear. Nearer to noon, member Bruce showed up, but by then Robert and Dave had already ordered their lunch. Bruce followed suit and ordered some food, too. Small

talk centered around cameras, Thanksgiving, Christmas, and even Star Trek.

The meeting began with a call for old business. No old business, and so, Robert continued with new business. Robert reported that due to a surplus Amiga 3000 being given away, the recipient of that computer gave a generous donation for the Commodore Los Angeles Super Show, and Robert sent a check in that amount to the Burbank VFW, the CLASS venue. He also reported that the Los Angeles Maker Faire and the Bay Area Maker Faire had set their show dates for 2025, April for the LA Maker Faire and September for the Bay Area Maker Faire. The former was already asking for exhibitors. Of course, Robert was ready to send in an application for an exhibit of classic computers.

December – the month for FCUG elections. After brief discussion, Robert motioned that the current slate of officers be re-elected for 2025; Bruce seconded the motion. Robert asked for those in favor of the motion, and the motion was passed unanimously, i.e., the current FCUG officers will serve again next year.

Robert had set up the A600GS, the small box powered by an Orange Pi, containing a hardware interface with USB, audio out, and classic joystick ports; and running V46 software which gave the GS an Amiga-like (emulated) experience. First, Robert showed an Internet photo of the boards inside the GS case; then he went to the running GS on table, unscrewed its case, and showed the boards again. After reassembling the case, he went on to show the method of getting new software onto the GS – save an Internet download of an .ADF (Amiga Disk File) onto a USB stick, insert that stick into one of the USB ports of the GS, click the ADD button on the GS screen, then click on the name of the USB stick, find the name of the .ADF and click on that, adjust the settings in the Edit menu

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for that .ADF and save, and then finally run the .ADF from the GS in order to make sure that it runs. He also showed how to save a thumbnail image of the .ADF so that it is displayed on the GS' Games/Applications screen.

Because Bruce and Dave were leaving relatively early, there was no time to do any C64 presentations on the Ultimate 64, and so, Robert continued with the A600GS. First, he ran the .ADF he had installed during the above-described .ADF procedure, the .ADF being Labyrinth, a program which the developer admitted had been inspired by the C64 Labyrinth. This Amiga version had colors, whereas the C64 version had shading against the traditional blue C64 screen background. Also Amiga Labyrinth had music, sounds, on-screen hints, a map (shown only once), and even a preface. Without all the bells and whistles, Amiga Labyrinth played pretty much like the C64 version.

Then continuing with the 130 games and applications he had installed or had already been present on the GS when he bought the machine, Robert showed some of the early ones from 1985/1986, the beginning of the Amiga. He ran 3D Maze (which seemed more intriguing than Labyrinth), Star Trek (the classic text-based simulation), YachtC (Yahtzee... which couldn't be played without instructions), Carrier Command (interesting futuristic navy simulator... but again impossible to play without instructions), PacBoy (a nice, colorful Pacman but lacking the recognizable Pacman sounds), F/A-18 Interceptor (the demo was run so that the qualities of the 3D flight animation could be appreciated), and Chessmaster 2000 (similar to the C64 version and similar in that Robert lost even when Chessmaster was set to its easiest level). In new 2024 software, Robert showed off AmiBench (the Amiga-like desktop), the new Final Writer 7 (Final Writer 6 was last updated in the early 2000's), and Directory Opus (the classic directory

manager modded to run on the GS), Bunny's Hop (popular with Bay Area Maker Faire kids who had lightning reflexes but not with Robert who had slower reflexes), and Metro Siege (a beat'em up in the Street Fighter vein).

Bruce wanted to know if the A600GS with its Final Writer 7 could print to modern USB printers. Robert said that FW7 could save a document as a .PDF, and then that document could be moved to a computer/printer that printed out PDF's. Then Bruce and Dave bemoaned the fact that classic Commodores and Amigas couldn't use modern USB printers. Robert remarked that the expensive Retro-Printer external module was available from England. The Retro-Printer module had a parallel port on one side, a USB port on the other side, and a Raspberry Pi inside which did the translation of signals from the classic computer to signals that a modern USB printer could understand. Robert mentioned he had one of the RP's; he had connected a C64 to it and successfully printed to a USB printer. However, he also said that it was difficult to configure it to a specific printer; he had to have a friend go into its Linux operating system (on the Raspberry Pi) and use the command line to change settings. Because of that difficulty in changing printers, he put away the Retro-Printer and never used it again.

Bruce wanted to know if he could use .ADF's in his classic Amiga 2000. Robert said that Bruce needed to have a minimum of Amiga OS 3.1 on the A2000, and Bruce thought that he had that on his rebuilt computer. Robert said that OS 3.2 automatically recognized .ADF's, but for 3.1 he thought that other enhancements were needed. (After the meeting, Robert e-mailed all members that there was the Gotek solution, a bit of hardware which could be internally mounted into the A2000 or externally cased and which could read .ADF's from a USB stick and load and run them like real floppy disks.)

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THE A600GS - AN ODYSSEY

-by Robert Bernardo



The new A600GS is a system that comes in a small, black case and has HDMI, USB, Ethernet, wi-fi, and traditional 9-pin ports. Developed by AmigaKit in the United Kingdom, the GS runs Amiga OCS/ECS/AGA games, demos, and applications.

I had expressed an interest in the A600GS back in 2023, but pre-orders didn't open up until spring 2024. As soon as I was given the go-ahead, I ordered it and waited. It came in mid-July, and surprisingly it arrived in a large box. Inside the packing box was the A600GS box, an elegant, black box with silver lettering which signified that this was a step above THEA500 Mini with its consumerish, toy-like box.

It has been a learning experience in the use of the A600GS. It is not like THEA500 Mini in which you can use 25 games straight out of the machine. My A600GS, serial number #0004, came with only a few applications, Octamed, Final Writer, and Directory Opus; and one game, Thunderhell. When I first powered it up, it came up with the AmigaKit activity/scroll bar screen; there was no activity light on the A600GS case. Then the screen went dark, but not for long, and another

screen, the Welcome screen, came up, asking for you to press a key/button to continue. I did that, and I heard start-up music, but what was that scratchy, staticky sound that accompanied the music? That didn't bode well, if this machine was supposed to provide accurate emulation of the Amiga. I navigated the Game/Application screen with the provided game controller. The A600GS controller felt lighter and more plasticky than THEA500 Mini gamepad.

I learned how to go left and onto the menu sidebar. I learned the various action buttons at the bottom of the screen. A different experience than the accustomed Amiga Workbench desktop with menu items at the top and drop-down menus. Then I tried the game, Thunderhell. It booted, but I was treated to that scratchy sound again. Was the game trying to play music? Only scratchy sound. Was it trying to play sound effects? Only scratchy sound. The game itself had o.k. playability, but the sound was a turn-off. I put the machine away. That Sunday I was going to see Duncan M. of The Other Group of Amigoids (San Jose/Los Gatos). I would show him the A600GS and do any A600GS upgrades at his place.

Sunday came around, and I traveled the 90 minutes through terrible South Bay traffic to get to him. In his garage workshop, we got into the nitty-gritty of the machine, i.e., figuring out how to improve it. First of all, that scratchy sound. Hmm, nothing on the sidebar menu to control that. O.K., maybe upgrading it would improve that. We tried to connect into his house's wi-fi. I had brought a USB mouse to connect into the A600GS but no keyboard. That made navigating a little easier, but connecting to the wi-fi was still an ordeal, because Duncan had to use the virtual keyboard of the machine in order to input the wi-fi settings.

Once that was done, he tried to connect to his network. Nothing. Try again. Nothing. Go over

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the settings again. Change this. Connect. Nothing. Look at the settings again. Connect. Nothing. Try again. Nothing. Yow, this was bad! Finally, Duncan thought something must be wrong internally with the A600GS, and I gave him permission to unscrew the case. Inside the case, we saw the Orange Pi, the 64 gig mini-SD card which held the operating system and storage, and the accessory HAT (Hardware ATtachment) that gave all the external connections on the case. Duncan also noticed that the wi-fi connection had fallen off the wi-fi board. Ah-ha... that was the reason for no connection to his network. He pressed the connection back onto the board (a press-fit, not a soldered-on connection). Then he tried to log into his wi-fi again. Success! The network was recognized. He reassembled the case and went onto the next order of business – to connect to the Amisphere and update the A600GS.

The Amisphere is AmigaKit's invention where a user can go this website site, log in, and download all updates and sponsored games/applications. It's supposed to make the A600GS experience easier on the user.

However, the first time on the Amisphere was not the best. First, you had to register. Without a real keyboard connected to the A600GS, you had to use its virtual keyboard. What a pain! Since I was bad with virtual keyboards, I let Duncan handle this. He inputted all my information and clicked to send. After waiting awhile, nothing happened. Hmm, redo the name and password? Resend. Nothing. Redo. The problem was that there was no activity light on the case that showed something was happening nor was there any warning from the site that he had done something wrong. Finally, the site told him that I was registered. I had to go to my e-mail to pick up the confirmation message which gave a user name (basically various letters and numbers) to use with the A600GS.

Back on the GS, Duncan inputted my new user name and password. Yay! Connection to the Amisphere. He downloaded all the updates, and they automatically installed themselves on the GS. Now with the latest updates, the GS rebooted. Aw, the scratchy sound was still there but to a slightly lesser degree. There was now a little note on the right bottom corner of the screen that said to press F12 get to the pause/quit game menu. According to what I had read on-line, there were dozens of other hidden improvements to the system.

That was enough; it was 9:30 p.m. and time for me to drive back. I would be coming back to the area next Saturday for The Other Group of Amigoids meeting, and hopefully by then, I would have more games/apps to show. During the week, I searched for .ADF's to install into the GS. I found that there were hundreds at the Internet Archive. I went there and discovered that they were categorized by year. O.K., I'd start at the beginning with 1985 and 1986. I downloaded dozens of them, most of them being games, the others looking like educational programs.

First on the list was Archon. O.K., I learned the process of navigating the GS menus on how to install the .ADF of that game. Then I clicked on START. Ack! I got was a strangely-colored desktop screen with the AROS label at the top; I was used to an Amiga Workbench screen. The screen had an Archon icon. I clicked on that. Double ack! The system would crash with a Guru Meditation. Subsequent tries would crash with the guru or crash and lock up or just do nothing. This was not the way it's supposed to be. This wasn't being user-friendly.

Sunday, I went to the Fresno Commodore User Group meeting. I mainly showed off the latest games and demos running on the Ultimate 64 (C64) and left the A600GS for the last part of the

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meeting. I tried to install Archon there but failed again.

The following week, after doing some more on-line forum reading, I found that others were having problems. I also found a possible solution: use real Amiga Kickstart ROMs instead of the A600GS AROS ROM. O.K., I read that I couldn't use encrypted ROMs. Some people were getting theirs from the Amiga Forever DVD. I had that DVD, but I also had the Kickstart ROMs in my new AmigaOne A1222+. I decided to grab them from the A1222+. From the A1222+, I copied the Kickstart 1.3 (34.4) that covered older Amigas) and Kickstart 3.1 (40.68 that covered newer Amigas) onto a USB stick and moved the stick over to the A600GS. Then I installed the ROMs under the Manage ROMs menu item of the GS. To make sure, I rebooted the machine and looked at that menu again. Yup, they were there. In fact, there were many more choices to be had; not only was the A600GS ROM there but choices for A500, A500P, A1200, A4000, CDTV, and CD32. On a side note, I read of people using Kickstart 3.2 ROMs, too, but for compatibility, I thought 3.1 was best.

Back to Archon. I edited the GS menu for it to show that it was to run under A500; I supposed that the GS was smart enough to pick the correct ROM. Then I started Archon. Interesting! I got an Amiberry screen this time. Then I got a Workbench 1.3 screen. That was good. However, when I clicked on Archon, the game wouldn't run. Perhaps it was just a file that the GS couldn't handle.

I deleted Archon out of the GS and installed Chessmaster 2000. Again I edited the GS menu to show it running under the Kickstart 1.3 ROM. Again when I ran it, I got the Amiberry screen, and again I got a Workbench 1.3 screen. However, this time the game ran! Ah, that was good. I had to make sure. I dropped out of

Chessmaster and restarted it. This time no Amiberry screen (and it never came back again) and I got the WB 1.3 screen and Chessmaster thereafter. Next I tried to install the Arctic Fox .ADF and specified it was to run as an A500 file. It didn't run.

At Saturday's TOGA meeting, I showed mostly showed off the A1222+ and just a little bit of the A600GS. The GS only had its built-in apps/game and Chessmaster 2000, and so, I was a bit embarrassed to show that it couldn't do more. The next day I went to the Sacramento Amiga Computer Club meeting. Jerry Gray, v.p. of the group, also had brought his A600GS. We could commiserate! I was able to get some pointers from him. He, too, was having trouble with .ADF's, but he said that Arctic Fox needed a really old Kickstart in order to run. O.K., that meant I wasn't doing anything wrong. He, too, wasn't sure what to do with WHDLoad games; perhaps they could be installed on the Amibench side of the GS? (The GS manual hardly says anything about WHDLoad.) I mentioned that I had gotten my Kickstart ROMs from the A1222+; he had gotten his from the Amiga Forever DVD, but he seemingly had more compatibility problems with those Kickstarts. He easily used a wireless keyboard and mouse with his GS; to me, that was the way to go. During the meeting, he showed off the relatively new Donkey Kong 500, an OCS game which could be downloaded from itch.io. Ah, I had been concentrating on getting old games to run on the GS and had forgotten that new games were always being developed. I'd have to install some of those on the GS, too. A few days later I finally obtained a wireless keyboard and mouse combo to be used with my GS. How had I ever put up with the GS before those items?! Now the process of installing and running my collected .ADF's went much more smoothly. In other words, my productivity had gone up!

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In two hours, I went through a bunch of .ADF's, trying out each one of them. Some didn't want to run; those got deleted. In two hours, I installed 20 running games and apps. These were just the programs from 1985, and I still had the hundreds of programs from 1986 and on up at the Internet Archive. I even fixed the Thunderhell game. Out of the box, it used the AROS ROM; I edited its settings to use the A500 Kickstart 1.3 ROM. What a difference! The game now loaded with correct music and sound effects, making for a much better playing experience. Upon exit from the game, there was only a trace of the scratchy sound. (I found out much later that my monitor not only had failing HDMI video but also failing HDMI audio. When I switched to another HDMI monitor, the bad sound disappeared.)



Left - AmigaOne A1222+, right - A600GS

If I could get 20 games or applications installed a day, I would have quite a collection of programs on the A600GS by the time of the next FCUG, SACC, TOGA meeting, or even the shows, like Maker Faire and Amiwest. I could surprise the show attendees, "Yes, this is a new Amiga product from 2024!"*

Unfortunately, tragedy struck! After a few days, I had installed a hundred games onto the GS, and I had put thumbnail pictures on each of game disk

representations on the Game/Application screen. Satisfied with what I had, I noticed that the screen was overscanning my tv/monitor a little bit, and I went into the GS preferences menu to see if I could fix that. I tried a different setting, but that was worse, so I went back to the original 1920x1080 screen, and I also turned off Bluetooth as per the GS manual's recommendation (a slight performance increase if you turned off Bluetooth). I then restarted the machine via its menu. The scroll screen came up but with the video setting that I didn't want. I heard the start-up music but no welcome screen came up! It was all blackness and just the red pointer! Big-time crash! I clicked a few times on the black screen, but nothing happened. I turned off the GS via its in-line power switch and then turned it back on. The same result as above! I tried that a few more times and got the same dismal failures. The GS was toast.

This was at 10 p.m, and I decided to call AmigaKit at 2 a.m. (10 a.m. UK time). When I did that, I got the answering machine and left a message. After not quite a full night's sleep, I called AmigaKit at 8:46 a.m. (4:46 p.m. UK time), and I reached Matthew Leaman, owner of AmigaKit. A bit of small talk and I got into the gist of the matter.

First, Matthew said I should click "madly" all around the black screen in hopes that would force a hard reset on the machine. If that failed, then he would send me a GS image of the microSD card that resides inside the GS case; I would have to download that image, and by using WinImage on a Windows computer, I could place that on a new card and insert that into the machine. As for the old card, he said I could image it and send him the image for investigation and possible recovery. Just a problem, though... my high-speed Internet is not really that high, i.e., after waiting a long time, I might be able to download the new image, but uploading the old image might be impossible.

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I'd have to mail him the old microSD card via postal mail.

I thought I would receive a new GS image right away; I was wrong. Even after sending Matthew a reminder e-mail (to which there was no response), I waited weeks. Finally, after making mention on the Amiga.org forum that I had a trashed microSD card, the next day (October 1) there was an image waiting online for me to download. I eagerly downloaded that image, downloaded WinImage, ran that Windows program on my PC laptop, and easily transferred the image to a new microSD card.

I put the card into the GS and with trepidation, I booted the system. It worked! Then I redid the customization of the system. I installed the Amiga Kickstart ROMs and turned off the Bluetooth. Then I rebooted the system to make sure that all had been saved. Oh, no, the start screen with the progress bar but nothing after that! No Games/Applications screen! O.K., take out the card, reformat it, re-image it with the above process, reinsert the card into the GS, and boot the machine. Success! The machine booted correctly. I customized the GS again through its Configuration screen, including turning off the Bluetooth. Reboot. Failure! The card was trashed again. What was I doing wrong? I thought and thought. The Bluetooth... there must be something wrong when I turned off the Bluetooth. Somehow, the very act of doing that was messing up the SD card.

I took out the card, reformatted it, re-imaged it, reinserted it into the GS, and booted the GS. O.K., everything was fine. Then I went to the Configuration screen, but this time in my customization, I left the Bluetooth at its default setting of being on. I rebooted the GS and... success! The machine booted correctly, first the Start-up/Progress bar screen, then the music, then the Games/Application screen. I turned off the

GS and turned it back, initiating the boot-up process again. Again, success! Ah, everything was now o.k..

Well, the October 1 image on the card didn't have my saved details for re-logging into the Amisphere. In other words, I'd have to get to a high-speed connection and go through the user name/password process again. Updates to the system would have to wait. I wanted to get more software into the GS so that it could be demonstrated at user group meetings and shows successfully. Over many hours and several days, I installed over 115 games and applications into the GS, the ones from 1985/86 and the new ones, too. The big tests for the A600GS would be the October 18-20 Bay Area Maker Faire. Tens of thousands would be attending the Bay Area MF. Would the GS be reliable when the general public got their hands on the machine? The A600GS came through with flying colors! Placed next to another 2024 computer, the AmigaOne A1222+, the A600GS ran the games, like the new Metro Siege, for hours and hours without fail. For those who wanted to find out more, I had an information sheet next to the GS which detailed its specifications. For those who really were into it, I explained that it was an Orange Pi, that it had AROS and Kickstart ROMs, that it could really be used as a computer with use of a keyboard and mouse, that it was from AmigaKit and cost about \$145 US.

Any further bugs with the GS? Well, at the October 25-27 Amiwest Show, I met Matthew Leaman who had come all the way from Great Britain in order to exhibit and sell the A600GS and other AmigaKit items. Since October 1, he said that there had been many updates to the system. I told him about the Bluetooth problem and about a new problem with a new Amiga game, Tale of Evil. The ISO, basically a CD image of the game, would not run correctly on the GS. In fact, if you went to the Configuration

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crimefighter who wears their Underoos on the
outside of their panty hose?**

screen for it, the machine would just reboot, i.e., no Configuration screen to change its default use of the AROS ROM nor even to change its settings so you could delete the file. With use of my GS, I demonstrated this behavior in front of Matthew, and he thought it was very odd. He advised me to e-mail him the offending file, and he'd have his software techs have a look at it. For those monitors that did not do audio through HDMI, Matthew showed how to change the GS audio output from HDMI to the GS's analog audio port. I had an overscanning problem with the monitors I was using; Matthew advised going to a different video Khz. setting on the Configuration screen. I asked whether the games and apps in the Games/Applications screen are available through Amibench; he said no, i.e., I'd have to install them on the Amibench desktop.

The A600GS is still a work in progress. We users have been the testers for the system. The bugs are being squashed one-by-one. The updates are still coming. For THEA500 Mini, there is the Aminimiga distribution which gives you an entire desktop with hundreds of applications ready to use. Though the process to get the applications on the A600GS is slower, the A600GS is far more flexible and configurable. You feel that you are using a computer rather than a toy. I haven't investigated much into the Amibench desktop; that would be next in the learning process. All-in-all, I am satisfied with A600GS.

* Nowhere in the A600GS manual does it say anything about Amiga, except for a line mentioning wiki.amiga.org

ON THE COVER

Christmas is possibly everyone's favorite time of the year (Scrooges and Grinches are the exception) and Commodore knows how to make a

splash during the holidays! Even forty plus years later, Commodore comes up with the best graphics that would even make Sony and Nintendo take notice. Here is a display of some of the great Commodore art celebrating the start of the season.

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-The Small Print-

The Fresno Commodore User Group is a club whose members share an interest in Commodore 8-bit and Amiga computers. Our mailing address is 185 W. Pilgrim Lane, Clovis, CA 93612. We meet monthly in the meeting room of Panera Bread, 3590 West Shaw, Fresno, CA. The meetings generally include demonstrations, discussion, and individual help.

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