

The Interface

"Taking 8-Bits Into The 21st Century"

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On Guard!

Nothing Like A Black Cat In The Fall To Protect Your Commodore Computer

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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

I MISS MY COMMODORE (AND SO DO THE CATS)

With the ongoing advancements of PCs, those who rely on them for every day tasks must keep up with the changes. This means that older computers fall by the wayside, if not disappear altogether. However, die-hard users of every computer that has been made will always come up with new software, new hardware, and other developments to keep their particular computer up to modern standards.

What about the stock user? Those who are also classic computer enthusiasts who either can't afford the hundreds of dollars improvements or are too proud of their stock units that they do not wish to make any changes. I personally am in the "can't afford it" category and only get what I need when I can afford it.

In this particular instance I will write about the Commodore computer.

The Commodore 64 has been a part of my family since 1989. I've owned several models of Commodores since then – the 64, the 128, as well as the Amiga 500, 1000, and 1200. I never could understand the Amiga, part of the reason being that the Amigas I bought had corrupted software attached with them or had the needed boot disks missing altogether. I put an ad in the "For Sale" section of my local paper and quickly got the Amigas out of my house. I beg forgiveness from all those dedicated users of Amiga for this error. This left me with only the some 64s and a few 128s.

When it came to the Commodore 128, I only used the unit for the "renumber" feature to re-calibrate the line numbers Commodore 64 programs that I had coded. Between 1992 and 2015 I was writing programs as well as word processing several stories -- all on the Commodore. As time moved forward, the PC started to slowly take over my house and all my writing needs. This left my Commodore basically out in the cold. These days, except for the occasional making of word search puzzles for church, my Commodore sits dormant in the Computer Room. However, when I do find a need to sit down in my high back black office chair and face the desk where my Commodore resides, I am joined by two furry creatures who like to do strange things when they hear my 1541 disk drive chatter to life.

I am referring to my two fur balls that are my household cats affectionately named Lee and Tot.

Tot is an almost pure black India ink cat except for the few white hairs that grow out of his chest. Lee is a gray striped tabby that is chubby enough to be assigned his own zip code. They both are affectionate, especially when it comes to me filling the dinner bowl every morning when I get up. When it comes to the Commodore, though, they act completely different.

After a terrible summer, Humpty Dumpty has a great fall.

On those days when I do go into the computer room to work on a short project (like making the aforementioned word search puzzles), I sit down in black chair and boot the machine. At the same time I glance to my right and there are Lee and Tot, staring into the room from the entrance waiting to be invited in. A snap of my fingers and a point to the throw rug in the center of the room and both cats immediately rush in demanding attention. Lee usually stays on the floor close to my computer chair while Tot instantly jumps onto the stand and places himself in front of the monitor, making absolutely sure that I can't see what I'm doing and all attention is on him. Tot tries to play coy and act like he is looking out the window searching for intruders; I know perfectly well that he is wanting love.

Lee, on the other hand, is not shy about asking for attention. If I let my right hand hang over the arm rest, Lee is instantly rubbing my hand with his head begging to be petted. He gets so aggressive about it that he will even stand up on his hind legs and rub my hand with a lot of force. Yet, when Lee thinks he is being overstimulated, he will nip my hand to ask me to stop petting him.

So there I sit. Tot is blocking my view of the computer monitor while Lee is not giving me a chance to begin the work that originally brought me into the room by keeping my right hand occupied.

Why am I writing about this? Because the cats know that I am happiest and more at peace when I am working on the Commodore than my PC. Cats, like other animals, can sense and react to emotions emanating from people. They know that my work keeps me from enjoying my time at home. With all the stresses from the job I usually stay tense for the rest of the evening. When I sit at my Commodore, the cats know that I go into a

different kind of relaxation mode which, in turn, puts them in a relaxed mode. Sometimes I will walk by the computer room door and see both Lee and Tot sitting alone in the Commodore room waiting patiently for me to come in and use the computer.

What do the cats do when I work on my PC? Tot has no interest in my work on the laptop so he usually sleeps on the sofa at the far end to stay far away from me while Lee, like one of the lion statues in front of the New York Public Library, lies on the right arm of my lounge chair while I am sitting there on my PC and guards me from any distractions that may come by. When I close the lid on my laptop, Lee will jump down immediately and walk in front like I was a very important person. He then makes a right turn into the computer room thinking that I am going to go into that room and do some Commodore work. Lee isn't too far from wrong in most instances as I am usually writing a skit for the children at church on the PC. After this work is done I use the Commodore to (you guessed it) make a word search that corresponds to the lesson presented in the skit.

I have been an advocate for the Commodore computer for many years but even I have to admit that I am doing less and less on the machine because most of the computer work that I need to do can be done on the PC. I know that Commodore advancements have made the computer as compatible with modern PCs as possible but, as stated earlier, costs seem to get in the way with living expenses always going up. Honestly, I am glad that, though I'm not a Commodore power user, I am still counted among those that use a Commodore computer ... and my cats are thankful for this, too.

After a terrible summer, Humpty Dumpty has a great fall.



- By Robert Bernardo & Dick Estel

SEPTEMBER 2025

Robert came in about half an hour before the official start of the meeting, in order to set up his equipment. After setting up some gear, another person drew near and inquired if this was the Fresno Commodore User Group meeting. His name was Paul P., and he had found out about the club through one of Robert's postings on the Net. Soon, vice-president Roger showed up and started setting up the club equipment. All during that time, Paul conversed with Robert and Roger, and the two FCUG officers tried to bring him up to speed with everything that was happening in Commodore and Amiga news. Robert passed around the latest issue of Commodore Gazette magazine for everyone to see.

After lunch was ordered and eaten, the meeting began in earnest. In old business, Robert reminded everybody that the club picnic lunch was going to happen in October. In new business, he talked about his European travels to the Archive of Retro Computing in Kingston, London, England; the HomeComputerMuseum in Helmond, the Netherlands; the HCC Commodore (Netherlands Commodore Show), the SCK CommodoreTraffen (Swedish Commodore Show), and the Amiga North Thames meeting in Enfield, London, England. He also gave away

French souvenirs (miniature Eiffel Tower on a key chain) to those at the meeting.

He spoke about the Bay Area Maker Faire which was going to happen in a few days, the Rocklin Maker Faire the weekend after that, and the Amiwest Show on November 1-2. At the BAMF and the RMF, he would exhibit Commodore and Amiga computers, and at Amiwest he would be videotaping the presentations for eventual uploading to Youtube.

After discussion, Robert demonstrated the A600GS to newbie Paul, basically giving him a rundown of how to get to the menu, how to install games and demos, how to run those games/demos, and how to get to the AmiBench desktop and run AmiBrowser (a web browser based on Chrome). Robert briefly showed the Ultimate 64, describing its motherboard and inputs and outputs. He ran a few games and demos from the machine. Roger showed Paul the use of the SD2IEC with the Commodore 128, running games in C64 mode and running GEOS 64. He also showed his latest project, connecting his Android cellphone to the C128's user port via adapter cables and a VIC-1011 cartridge, and thus turning the C128 into a terminal.

Paul was fairly knowledgeable on all the computer talk about Commodore and Amiga, and both Robert and Roger hoped that Paul would come back for another meeting.

OCTOBER 2025

As it does every year, October rolled around in 2025, meaning it was time for the Fresno Commodore User Group's Annual Picnic, which is now really an annual lunch.

"So what," you may ask. "Don't you have lunch every month?"

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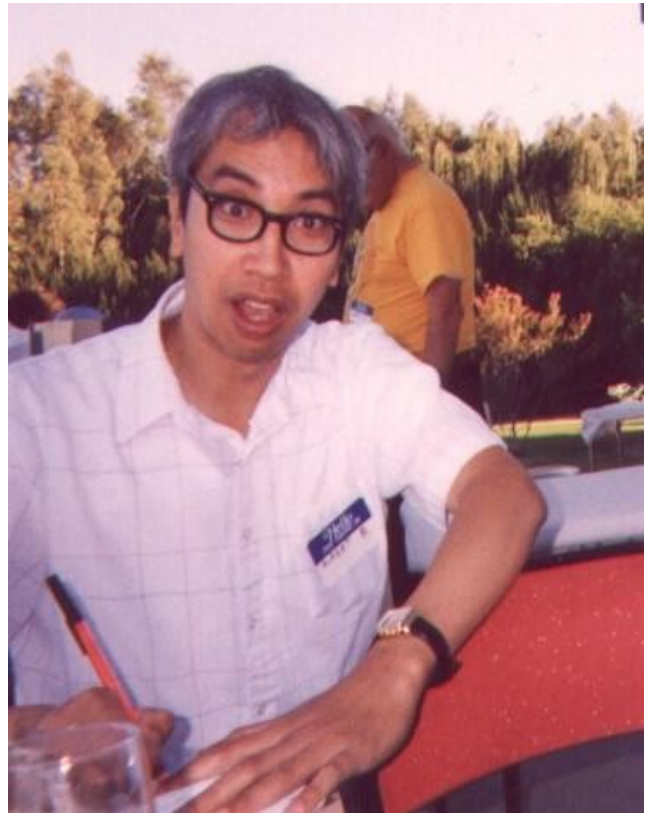
We do indeed. But for this special occasion, we eat at a different restaurant from our usual location. Also, we don't bring equipment, there are no demonstrations, and computer talk is limited.

Having enjoyed Italian food the last two years, we went with a more standard San Joaquin Valley cuisine – Mexican, specifically El Rodeo in Clovis, a small city east of Fresno.

The turnout was pretty much as usual - Dave Smith, his daughter Megan, Robert Bernardo, Roger Van Pelt, Bruce Nieman, and Dick Estel.

Robert passed out copies of the latest Interface newsletter, the July-August edition, as well as souvenirs from France for those who had missed the September meeting – little Eiffel Tower replicas in various bright colors.

The date of the first picnic is not certain, but Dick has photos from the 1997 event, so we can make a good guess that this is the 29th such event. How long can we continue? Stay tuned.



Robert at what was probably the first picnic, in 1997

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Team Commodore®

Dedication. Expertise. Passion. Joysticks.

Our team (shown in alphabetical order) blends original Commodore engineers and management with today's top creators, designers, and builders. Together, we share a love for innovation, authenticity, and the magical machines that started it all.



Marc Bilodeau
Chief Technology Officer



Al 'Father of the C64' Charpentier
Technical Advisory & Visionary

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Sean Donohue
Co-Founder



Jeri Ellsworth
Technical Advisor & Hardware Partner



John Errico
Legal Counsel

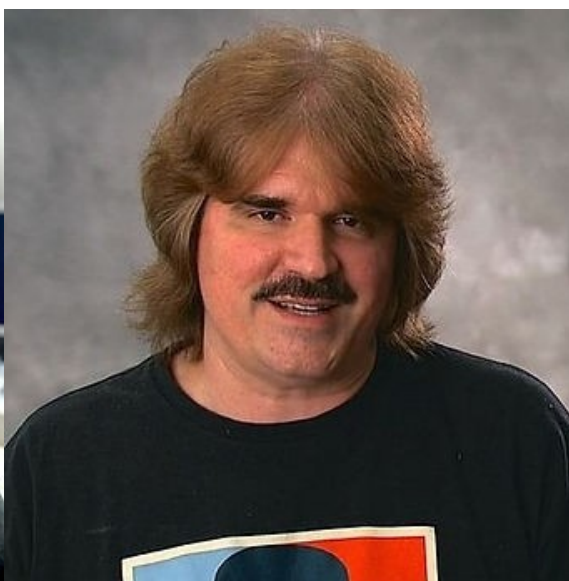


Christian (Peri Fractic) Simpson
Co-Founder & CEO

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Marcel Franquinet
Chief Quality Officer



Dave Haynie
Technical Advisor

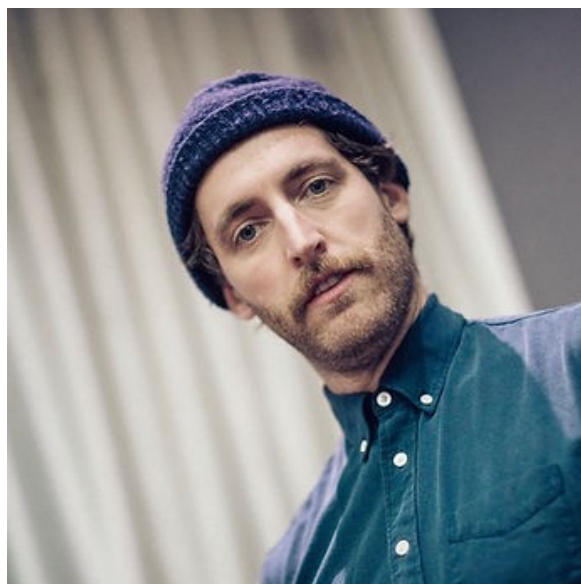


Bil Herd
Hardware Consultant (Animal)



RJ Mical
Chief OS Guru

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Thomas Middleditch
Chief Creative Officer



Leo Nigro
Co-Founder & Lead Engineer – PC & Amiga



David Pleasance
Retail Sales Director



Colin Proudfoot
Strategic Advisor

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Alex Rozenblat

Co-Founder & Chief Financial Officer



Fred Stickel

Chief Operating Officer



Cem Tezcan

Product Designer



Leonard Tramiel

CtrO (Chief Tramiel Officer)

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Distribution Manager



Jake Young

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Gideon Zweijtzer

Support Staff

Kodie Grantham, Stephanie Greenall, James Harrison, Marc Hetebrij, Esther Lee, Tim Morgan, Steve
Morris, Hans Olsen, Anton Palm, David Simmons, Pietro Zuco

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THE COMMODORE 64 ULTIMATE

-By Mark Tyson with additional by Robert Bernardo

The Commodore 64 Ultimate computer is the company's first hardware release in over 30 years [the last being the Amiga CD32 in 1993] — pre-orders start at \$299.

The Commodore 64 Ultimate will be the first new hardware released under the auspices of the new management. This new home computer product is now available for pre-order starting from \$299, but shipping won't happen until December at the earliest. For your cash, you will get a device which resolutely "isn't a software emulator" but is built around an AMD Artix 7 FPGA, and is claimed to be compatible with "10,000+ original games, cartridges, and peripherals."

[Earlier this year,] Christian "Peri Fractic" Simpson stated that he was now "the acting CEO of Commodore Corporation," had been joined by several iconic Commodore names, and teased a new hardware reveal [the Commodore 64 Ultimate]. The Commodore Corporation's acquisition seemed to be in the bag, but worryingly, funding wasn't complete, [and a] "low seven-figure" deal [was] to be finalized.

[By mid-year, he announced that the Commodore name and all its 41 trademarks had been bought.] [His] acquisition of the Dutch entity, Commodore Corporation B.V., was financed through a combination of angel investors, capital from professional investment funds, and revenue generated from sales of a new product, the Commodore 64 Ultimate.

Key details:

- **Acquisition Price:** The final price for the company's trademarks and intellectual property was described as a "low seven-figure sum" (likely between \$1 million and \$5 million).
- **Funding Sources:** Christian Simpson and his team secured the funds through private investment, with reports of some individuals taking out second mortgages or selling personal assets to make the buyout happen. Public share offerings were not possible due to legal restrictions.
- **Product Sales:** Sales of a "C64 Ultimate" product during its debut week generated over \$2 million, helping to secure the final financing and pay the price into an escrow account ahead of schedule.
- **Timeline:** The share purchase agreement was signed in June 2025, and the acquisition was finalized by early August 2025.

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(Image credit: Commodore)

Commodore 64 Ultimate overview

Refocusing on the new hardware launch, we see that there are three new Commodore 64 Ultimate models to choose from, but they only really differ cosmetically. These machines are claimed to be the first new official C64 computers in over 30 years. But the hardware hasn't been in stasis, and this Ultimate model has quite a few modern tricks up its sleeves.

As mentioned in the intro, the processing heart of these new C64 devices is the “faithful recreation of the original motherboard on [AMD Xilinx Artix-7] FPGA hardware.” The hardware is said to be “at least 99% compatible with all 80s/90s games, cartridges, and peripherals.” For clarity, we’ve tabulated other key specifications:

Commodore 64 Ultimate hardware specifications

Memory 128MB DDR2 RAM, 16MB NOR flash

Storage USB thumbdrives: FAT, FAT32, exFAT. File formats: .D64, .D71, .D81, .G64, .T64, .TAP, .PRG, .ROM, and more. ISO-9660 image support. Integrated Ultimate-II+ functionality with tape emulation and DMA loader

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Video	1080p @ 50Hz (PAL) or 60Hz (NTSC), HDMI-certified, Virtually Zero-lag, DVI-compatible via HDMI, Analog via DIN-8: CVBS, S-Video, or RGB
Sound	2 × SID sockets (6581/8580) with auto voltage and filter detection, UltiSID octal core FPGA SID emulation, SID-TAP header
I/O	3 × USB-A 2.0, 1 × USB-C, MicroSD slot, HDMI (cable included), 8-pin DIN for analog video, 3.5mm headphone jack, Optical S/PDIF, 100Mbps Ethernet, Wi-Fi, Cartridge port (>99% compatible), Datasette port (6-pin edge connector), Disk drive port (6-pin IEC DIN), 2 × DB-9 joystick/paddle ports, User port (26-pin internal, adapter sold separately)
Keyboard	66-key mechanical, Gateron Pro 3.0 55g switches, Original C64 layout and shapes, Full NKRO, USB plug, 70 RGB LEDs, Standard stabilizers
Lighting	Case and keyboard lighting thoughtfully integrated into motherboard and configurable via menu, Adjustable patterns, speeds, brightness (not on BASIC Beige model)
Other	Rocker switch (power, reset, menu, freeze), 12V DC worldwide power supply (included)

As well as the computer, PSU, and HDMI cable mentioned above, buyers will also get a spiral-bound user guide, a 64GB USB Cassette Drive featuring 50+ full games, including licensed classics, plus music, demos, a quick start guide, and a collection of stickers.

In operation, you may wish to use the cassette-style USB drive a lot of the time. There's convenient Wi-Fi game transfer available, too. However, C64 stalwarts can also have fun with their collections of "dusty old cartridges, CRT TVs, datasettes, or disk drives," assures the Commodore 64 Ultimate website.

Three editions, \$299, \$349, and \$499

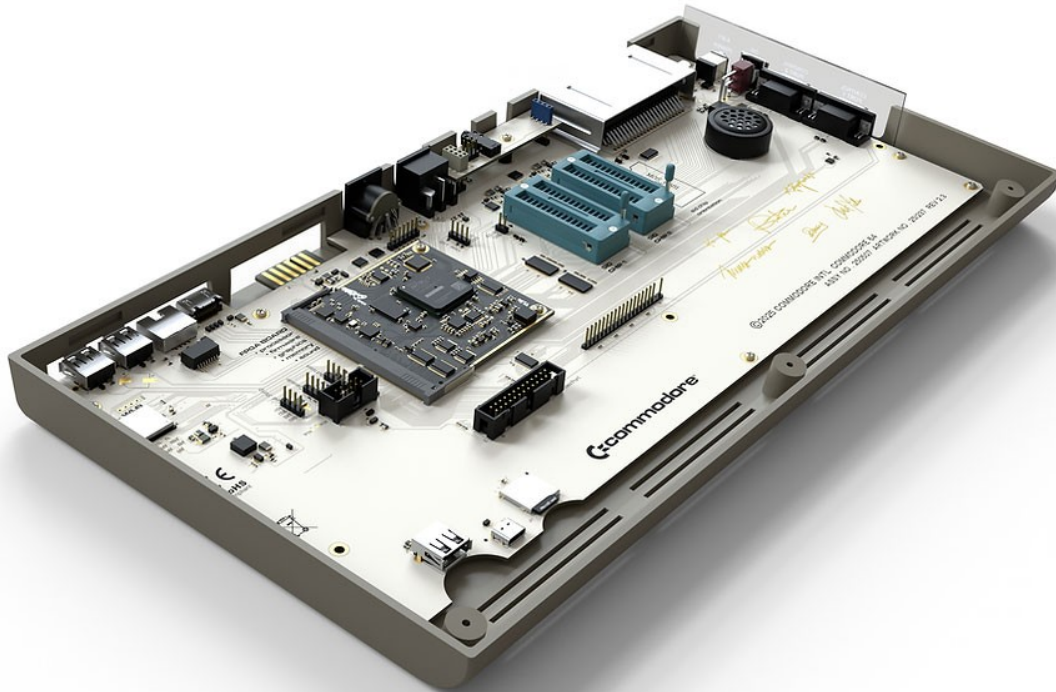
The cheapest entry to new Commodore 64 Ultimate ownership is the BASIC Beige edition at \$299 during the promotional pre-order stage of this project. As it says on the box, this is a standard beige machine, and it has no lighting frills. Despite the entry-level status, this machine will come with the same "autographs/names of C64 creators past and present, etched forever in the motherboard copper," as the other, more expensive models.

Moving up to the Commodore 64 Ultimate: Starlight Edition, and for your extra \$50, you will get a machine with a translucent case, featuring the "world's first translucent mechanical keyboard PCB." There is LED lighting, too, which can be configured to react to sounds coming from the computer.

Considerably more expensive, at a touted \$499, we find the Commodore 64 Ultimate: Founders Edition. This computer is housed in a translucent amber case, bearing a commemorative Commodore

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gold seal 'share' certificate. Moreover, there is a 24k gold Commodore badges 'dog tag' necklace, and a gold label holographic serial number sticker starting at 00000001. An "I Rebooted C=" t-shirt is also included in this collector's edition. Reactive lighting is also present on this model.



The Commodore 64 Ultimate motherboard (Image credit: Commodore)

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The menuing system for the Commodore 64 Ultimate (Image credit: Commodore)

Crowdfunding details and a reminder

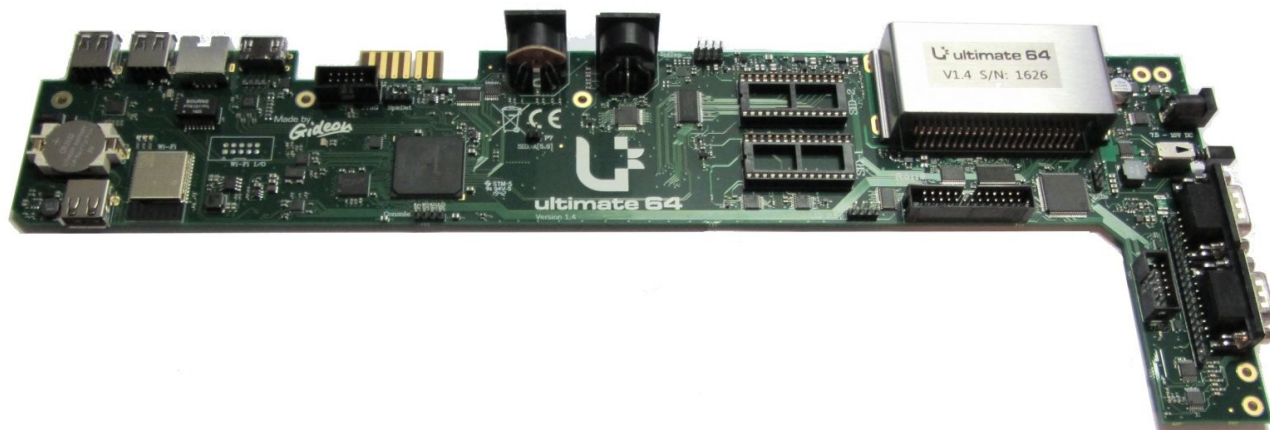
This project is using its crowdfunding platform, not Kickstarter or Indiegogo, to save expenses. However, the Commodore.net pages assure readers that this new official product comes with a money-back guarantee, which means you can cancel the order at any time before shipping for a full refund “no questions asked.” Once in your hands, you are promised a one-year limited warranty covering defects in materials and artistry.

Readers are also assured that the release of this hardware isn’t tied to the success of the Commodore Corp buyout. Still, some will want to wait until [the hardware is distributed] and be happy to pay a touted \$50 premium on these crowdfunding prices to benefit from insights from retro tech publication reviews, for the certainty of a finished manufacturing phase, and for shipping from stock.

Note from Robert Bernardo – Will I buy the Commodore 64 Ultimate? At this time, no. Why? I already have two Ultimate 64’s, the predecessor to the official Commodore 64 Ultimate. What are the differences between the U64 and C64U? In a nutshell, the former has less expanded memory, has 720p video instead of 1080p video, doesn’t have USB-C, optical S/PDIF, or a headphone jack; doesn’t necessarily have a mechanical keyboard (the user has provide his/her own keyboard and case), doesn’t have lighting, has a different menuing system, and has acceleration up to 48 MHz. compared to the

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C64U's supposed 75 MHz.. For me, the differences between the older and the newer are minor, not enough to justify buying the newer.



The Ultimate 64 (Image credit: Gideon Zweijtzer)

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From the Desk of Leonard Tramiel:

Commodore community,

I owe you a debt of gratitude. Over the years, while pieces of the Commodore brand were licensed, bought, and sold, you kept it alive.

My father famously said "computers for the masses, not the classes." I wish my father could have seen how Commodore lives on through you.

I always hoped that the brand would become whole again. I just really never thought it would happen. And I can't think of anything more appropriate, than someone from the community bringing Commodore back to life.

Many of the original team are back as advisors, including myself. All the trademarks are once again under one roof.

And the Commodore 64 Ultimate follows suit...

This is no replica. This is no emulation. This is Commodore.

None of this would be possible without your continued care, your commitment, and your creative spirit. I see my chief responsibility to the community is to answer one question: "What would Jack Tramiel do?"

It's an honor to do my best to answer that question, and to carry my father's legacy into the future.

Together, Commodore lives.

With my sincere thanks,

Leonard Tramiel

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Club Officers

Officers and Keypersons

President Robert Bernardo
 Vice-president Roger Van Pelt
 Secretary/Treasurer Dick Estel
 The Interface Editor Lenard Roach
 Librarian Roger Van Pelt
 Club equipment Roger Van Pelt
 Meeting place reservation Dick Estel

-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.

Dues are \$12 for 12 months. New members receive a "New Member Disk" containing a number of useful Commodore 8-bit utilities. Members receive a subscription to The Interface newsletter, access to the public domain disk library, technical assistance, and reduced prices on selected software/hardware.

Permission to reproduce content of The Interface is granted provided credit is given to the source, and when identified, the author. Club members are encouraged to submit articles, tips, or ideas for articles.

Disclaimer The club, its officers, members, and authors are not responsible for the accuracy of the contents of The Interface or the results of actions based on its contents.

Our disk library contains over 3,000 public domain programs for the C64 and C128. Members are entitled to copies of these disks at no cost if a blank disk is provided. We do not deal with pirated, copyrighted, violent, or obscene programs. Please call our attention to any programs found in our library which may violate these standards.

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