

WAS THE AMIGA A GAMES MACHINE

When I first bought my Atari STE in 1990, I was looking forward to the machine many said would rival the Amiga when it came to games. After all the Amiga had the advantage of hardware scrolling and the ability to display thirty-two colours on the screen compared to the ST's sixteen. Well, we got the hardware scrolling and the colours looked good, but still limited to sixteen colours at any one time. We were also treated to the new STE DMA sound chip and the impressive STE only game Obsession which blew the earlier ST games right out of the water. Sadly, apart from a few impressive demos, the STE only saw a small selection of software that would show off the new features so never became a real contender for the Amiga. Therefore, the Amiga continued to enjoy its victory with many titles programmed to use its better colour palette and sound chip.

Amiga and Atari Users had an ongoing rivalry with the "my computer is better than yours" argument. The Amiga was often labelled as just a "games machine" by the Atari ST community which caused a lot of conflict between users of both machines. I found the whole thing stupid and childish and refused to take any sides. However, there were people in the ST world that hated Amigas with a vengeance along with a lot of Amiga users with hatred towards ST users because of the constant insults towards their beloved machines. I remember once writing an article for an ST Diskzine on transferring mod files from the Amiga to the ST and receiving an email from a friend telling me he no longer wanted to be associated with the magazine because of the article. Although the friend wasn't an Amiga hater, he was concerned that the magazine was taking a dangerous direction by involving the Amiga in a positive way for a change.

So, was the Amiga a games machine? I used to own an Amiga 500 and later a 1200 and my honest opinion is that it is NOT just a game machine. Yes, games are its strong point but it can run other software quite well. I used it to program games using Amos Professional and can honestly say Amos is much better than STOS Basic, which is the ST version of this popular programming language. The Amiga also had Blitz Basic which was also a great language.

I think two things that let the Amiga down is the ease of use and its workbench operating system. Workbench tried to be a multitasking operating system like the PC's windows but unless you have one of the faster Amigas like the 1200 or 4000 then you will find workbench quite slow and sluggish to work with. Opening a directory meant listening to a

few seconds of disk churning before displaying a disorganised group of files and drawers (folders). Sometimes no files would appear and you would have to select the Show All option to display them. Workbench ran from a floppy disk and needed to be run from a hard drive installation to get the best out of it. The Atari's Gem operating system appears as soon as the ST switched on as it is stored in the ST's ROM chips and is considerably easier and faster.

Overall, I would recommend the Amiga as a good computer and not simply a games machine as I got a lot of benefit from it.