Amicom (Spreadpoint) (00.00.0000) coder

Amicom, Tue 10 Jul 2007

Interview (MediasRes) of: Amicom/Spreadpoint

Handle:

Amicom ([Spreadpoint museum](#))

How did you come up with your alias ?

I constructed it from "Amiga" and "Communication", two things that I considered very important for me.

City / Country:

Zurich / Switzerland

Born year:

1968

What was your first computer, and when did you get it?

As a child, I used to be the operator of my pocket calculator. I kept reaching out for models with as many strange symbols on the keys as possible. In 1979, that race culminated with the Texas Instruments TI-59, a little bit of a legend maybe, like the HP41c. It lighted the fire of fascination for programming in me. After doing rather silly things like writing an UPN emulator or finding ways to read out the internal functions ROM of the thing, I realized that programming without an alphabetic character set was not real fun. I saved all my money to buy a Sinclair ZX-81. Now that was a real quantum leap! Text, BASIC, even simple graphics and - machine code. A new world opened. That was in 1981.

How did you get into the scene and what groups have you been a member of ?

Actually, I got into the scene very late and not before the Amiga. Interestingly, computing has always included much of that irrational, ideological touch that it still has today. Only the names have changed: like Wintel against Macintosh at that time it was Commodore against Sinclair. And for me, Commodore used to be Wintel, the bad guys. C-64 was bad only just because it had to be. And therefore - unfortunately - I did not get into the scene. However when the Amiga was announced I immediately realized that this was the platform to go for. At the time - about the end of 1985, I met two very very cool guys: Zodiac and Depeche. They were both better socialized than me and knew lots of people. That way, I got into the scene. 1987 we formed a group called "The living box" after the

song "living in a box". Of course the "living box" was the Amiga. Ironically, soon after, SCA brought his legendary slogan "Something wonderful has happened - your Amiga is alive". In 1989 Depeche and I joined Spreadpoint.

What was the proudest moment in your career ?

I guess that was in 1983 when my self made memory expansion for the ZX-81 came to work. It was a proudness only inside me since there was nobody to whom I could explain what it was that made me proud. From that moment, I kept a feeling that tells me like "there's nothing that can't be done if you really want it".

For what specific reason(s) do you think that you are remembered ?

I was never so famous like other people. At that time I was not a marketing guy and preferred to have friends near me instead of becoming very famous. Maybe some people remember my funny "Blitter Copy" - since that name was kind of trendy.

What would you like to be remembered for ?

For being one among many who tried to raise the ideal of the Amiga: a creative and friendly computer that brings people together. And for initiating the Spreadpoint Virtual Museum of Computer Arts - the place where you can visit the remainders of the most creative epoque of computer history.

What made you stop the scene activity ? (and do you remember when?)

It was in 1990 when I first felt a kind of weariness. I suddenly no longer had the power like before, a power that enabled me to work for the Amiga during all my spare time. I realized that my ambitious "Atom demo" would probably never be finished.

The time of raise and a few cool pioneers was being taken over by the time of an infinite number of pseudo specialists and stupid selling of zillions of pee cees. Discovering new worlds was replaced by restless optimization of what was already there.

As my motivation for freaking was sinking, new and strong other motivations were raising: I fell in love with some girls and started to invest more and more time into improving my gloomy social position. I lost my best friend Depeche and I failed the exams of my study and was kicked out. About then was the end of my scene activity. Soon after, Buddha, SCA, me and others founded the company that we are still running today. We started producing commercial Amiga software: TopSCAn, GigaMem, FontDesigner alias TypeSmith and ISDN/Willhelm Tel. Working for "the other side" opened my eyes for a new aspect of the computing scene: software authors need money and have a right to fight against illegal copying.

Thinking back on the good old days, is there anything you regret?

No.

What was your favorite
GAME(S)

I seldom played games on the Amiga. The best games I remember go back to the time before the Amiga: Atic Atac, Sabre Wulf and others on ZX Spectrum and C-64.

DEMO(S)

Now I would never say this or that is the best demo. There are just too many really exciting demos on the Amiga. I just give you three randomly chosen highlights: the Antitrax 2001 Megademo (in fact the one that created the expression 'Megademo'), the Wild Copper RVb demodisk and the TRSI CeBIT '90 demo "revenge of the babbnaasen".

PROGRAMMER(S) (OR PROGRAMMING TEAM(S))

The guys at Electronic Arts. They are part of computer history.

CRACKER(S) (OR CRACKING GROUP(S))

I always had a special love for "The world ruling H.Q.C". In my eyes, crackers - just like hackers - must have a special "professional philosophy" as a legitimation for their work.

OVERALL GROUPS :

It is not fair to assign any group "the best".

COMPOSER(S)

No idea! The composers had the worst PR activity of all Amiga freaks! You never knew their names!

BEST COMPOSED TRACK(S)

One of the category "soundtracker" that I like is mod.Atmosphere (the author is not known to me).
One of the best in the category "C-64 like sounds" is the very long tune used in a Paranoimia intro (Dyter-07).

BEST GRAPHICS

The guys at Psygnosis? There were many good.

EVENT(S) (E.G. COPYPARTY)

No question, the best and the only real insider party I ever saw was the S.S.I party in Switzerland at the end of 1987 or maybe the beginning of 1988. That was before parties became big, lame and full of copykids. It was more like a developer's conference. An other cool event was the kicking ass party in 1991 or so. And of course I will always remember the last Amiga Devcon at Marriott Hotel in Orlando in spring 1993.

MEMORY(S)

Many cool SP-meetings, coding like mad all night long for a stupid trainer intro - an infinite number of days together with Depeche and of course our trips to Italy - carrying around big boxes with new hardware - a horrible night in a train to a party in the Netherlands - the stunning experience of my first meeting with someone who had done himself a real cool demo - thinking for hours together with Tilt, George II and Buddha about memory protection and virtual memory for AmigaDOS - the fascination of the early days of global networking (with x.25) - a time where hard disks were a revolution but had less capacity than todays standard ram size - installing boot block intros on all disks to make sure no virus gets there - many illusions, for example that the Amiga could become professional

through the introduction of UNIX - fighting with the authorities of Zurich University to let us set up amiga.physik.unizh.ch on the internet in 1991 - copying 200 pages of a ROM listing for magician 42 - the amiga 3000 on the title page of byte magazine - a demonstration of amigavision we held to convince swiss commodore leaders of their own product - watching how the pee cee community copied all the cool amiga stuff like DPaint, pictures and anims, ray tracing software, soundtracker and all the rest - fiddling with cables and screws to fit a new hard disk into the Amiga - seeking for the limits of speed of cpu and hardware - speculating together with other freaks about how the hell do they do that - a time where people like SCA seemed as high above as pop stars - meeting guys in computer shops, hoping to get some cool new demos or phone numbers.... and much more.

DRINK ?
I don't have one. But I hate beer!

What are you doing nowadays ?
Finishing studies in environmental sciences and running an internet company.

What are you doing on your spare time?
To many things, too many people, too much everything. Maybe 3 things to tell you: 1st I help to raise our company - which means I work there in marketing. Today starting your own business is hard even when you are in the quickly expanding and innovative internet area. Then there is a huge lot of people and sometimes even a girlfriend who all want some of my spare time. And then there is the Spreadpoint Virtual Museum of Computer Arts.

Is there anything you'd like to say to the public (read: admires)
You are among those who can see a bit clearer into what is going on in the world history of computing, otherwise you would not read this text. Keep watching the scene and keep asking questions. Why did the Amiga, NeXT and others have to vanish? Why do we have one single dominating CPU and OS platform? Will UNIX survive? What is going to be tomorrow? And maybe what do we have to do today.

What is the meaning of life?
Life is kind of a landscape that you have to explore. Without walking, there is no forthcoming. There are broad ways many people choose. Following them is easy and you are always in company. But the really exciting places are those that you discover for yourself when you find your own way, following nobody but your instinct. So one aspect of the meaning of live is you have to go out and discover it!