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04 Diving into the depths of Asm-Pro by Ghandy and Axel

Ghandy, Axel, Wed 05 Mar 2008

Diving into the depths of Asm-Pro

by Ghandy of Moods Plateau and Axel of Brainstorm

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Mark Reestman is also known under the name Solo Genetic. He developed an assembler tool named Asm-Pro on the Commodore Amiga, is 34 years old and lives a perfectly normal life in Holland with his girlfriend and his dog.

Feeling the challenge

Reestman started developing Asm-Pro when he used both Asm-One (by TFA) and Trashm'one. They both had different features and he needed some features of both, so he started to combine them. Also, his friend, One^Gnt, bought a graphics card for his Amiga 3000 and wanted to continue coding in assembler, but neither of the mentioned assemblers were compatible with graphics cards. That's when Reestman felt challenged. "I had a big challenge, to convert Asm-Pro's democoding-style display routines to system-friendly versions," comments Reestman. "Those were the first steps and everything went from there."

Other programmers don't sleep either. Last time he checked, Boussh of TFA had also made good progress with his Asm-One, adding new features and making it more system friendly. Reestman thinks both have their advantages and disadvantages, so which one you like is pretty much a matter of taste and personal preference.

"Demo coding experience makes you
a more creative programmer."

While most programmers are fascinated by creating visual effects, others are more interested in the technical challenges stemming



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from them. "I did make some demos and intros too back then," he elaborates. "We were also working on a platform game but never finished it. So I mixed up developing demos and adding new features to Asm-Pro. Both elements were challenging."

Feedback is an important element of today's scene and Reestman only received positive comments for all his efforts, even back in the day. "Lately, reactions have slowed down a lot but I still get an occasional email thanking me for the work I put into Asm-Pro. It's always nice to hear that there are still a lot of coders using it, even when development stopped a few years ago."

The demoscene is healthy for your professional life. One could probably argue about that, particularly from an employer's perspective, but in the case of Reestman, this is has clearly been the case. Indeed, application development experience (like with Asm-Pro) is always useful, particularly when you're a software engineer. "And demo coding experience in my opinion makes you a more creative programmer," he continues.

"Our group Genetic had members in Holland and in Sweden but the BBS division was mostly active in Holland. We had 4 BBSes and our traders were almost always in the top 10 of the dutch traders' list. I just did some small trading - phone bills got rather expensive here - and mostly on the Genetic boards and some others in Holland, but not abroad.

The end of Asm-Pro

Around 2002, Reestman stopped most of his activities in the Amiga scene. "Well, I guess just like a lot of old sceners, I had no more time next to my job and social life," he says. "My Amiga 1200 breaking down all the time didn't help either. When I stopped developing Asm-Pro 6 years ago I posted the source code on my site, so everyone can download the source, and make improvements or continue development. Some did and I posted these new versions on my site. The last contribution was done in 2005, resulting in the v1.1.7 release."

"I don't think much of the new Commodores."

Commodore's resurrection leaves Reestman cold. "I don't think much of the new Commodores as they are just PCs and this Commodore has nothing to do with the old Commodore that made our Amigas. In my opinion, a lot more interesting is the creation of the Minimig by Dennis van Weerden. He created a complete and new A500-compatible mini computer."

And finally, Solo Genetic would like to have a few last words. "Well, I would like to say hi to all the former Genetic members and thank



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all other people in the scene who supported and encouraged me to go on with the development of Asm-Pro. Special thanks to Flasher Jack, Blueberry and Boussh for contributing to the open source releases."