



The Future Was Here: The Commodore Amiga (Platform Studies)

By Jimmy Maher

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Long ago, in 1985, personal computers came in two general categories: the friendly, childish game machine used for fun (exemplified by Atari and Commodore products); and the boring, beige adult box used for business (exemplified by products from IBM). The game machines became fascinating technical and artistic platforms that were of limited real-world utility. The IBM products were all utility, with little emphasis on aesthetics and no emphasis on fun. Into this bifurcated computing environment came the Commodore Amiga 1000. This personal computer featured a palette of 4,096 colors, unprecedented animation capabilities, four-channel stereo sound, the capacity to run multiple applications simultaneously, a graphical user interface, and powerful processing potential. It was, Jimmy Maher writes in *The Future Was Here*, the world's first true multimedia personal computer. Maher argues that the Amiga's capacity to store and display color photographs, manipulate video (giving amateurs access to professional tools), and use recordings of real-world sound were the seeds of the digital media future: digital cameras, Photoshop, MP3 players, and even YouTube, Flickr, and the blogosphere. He examines different facets of the platform -- from Deluxe Paint to AmigaOS to Cinemaware -- in each chapter, creating a portrait of the platform and the communities of practice that surrounded it. Of course, Maher acknowledges, the Amiga was not perfect: the DOS component of the operating systems was clunky and ill-matched, for example, and crashes often accompanied multitasking attempts. And Commodore went bankrupt in 1994. But for a few years, the Amiga's technical qualities were harnessed by engineers, programmers, artists, and others to push back boundaries and transform the culture of computing.

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Editorial Review

Review

The Future Was Here is proof of just how exhilarating Platform Studies can be. Jimmy Maher has the rare talent of writing technical descriptions that are both challenging and accessible so that, at the conclusion of each chapter, one experiences the rewarding pleasure of having learned and understood something new and difficult.

(**Doug Reside**, Digital Curator for the Performing Arts, New York Public Library)

The Future was Here is by far the best document on the history, technology, and significance of the Commodore Amiga. An emotional read for those of us who were there, while explaining to everyone else just what made the Amiga such a seminal machine.

(**Jesper Juul**, New York University Game Center; author of *Half-Real*)

Jimmy Maher shows us how 'the Amiga' was a phenomenon not just of hardware and software, but of community and creativity. He digs past easy nostalgia and into the telling specifics, revealing what enabled the Amiga to define so much of the playful, media-rich personal computing world in which we live today.

(**Noah Wardrip-Fruin**, Computer Science Department, University of California, Santa Cruz; author of *Expressive Processing*)

At once challenging, rewarding, emotional, and insightful...a compelling read for those interested in the Amiga platform, as well as those interested to learn more about the culture of computing.

(**John F. Barber** *Leonardo Reviews*)

About the Author

Jimmy Maher is an independent scholar and writer living in Norway.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Krystal Harris:

As people who live in the particular modest era should be change about what going on or info even knowledge to make these people keep up with the era which is always change and advance. Some of you maybe will update themselves by studying books. It is a good choice to suit your needs but the problems coming to you is you don't know what kind you should start with. This *The Future Was Here: The Commodore Amiga (Platform Studies)* is our recommendation to cause you to keep up with the world. Why,

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