

amiga

ISSUE 4 - 2008 - VOLUME 2

guiden

- News
- DVD information
- Trashcan Dept.
- Game from Iraq:
 Babylonian Twins



Photo:
Tommy Strand

#AG issue 4-2008
Volume 2

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for AmigaWeb.net, and for
#amiga guide magazine.

Contact::
tommy@garantert.net
or chat with alef at EFnet IRC

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readme.first

Here we are again

Did we not hear this sentence too often in some speech for people at a party in good mood: «Here we are again.» Aint it just that the servant:says to the Dutchess in that famous TV scene in each and every Christmas time: «Here we are again, Miss Sophie...»

Yes, for now we are here again, at the end of the year, the time for speaches full of nice and promising words, the time to make status and the time to look both forwards and backwards in time with grief in the eyes.

What status do we make for this year in NAF? The members count for full paying members is still sinking, but could most lightly be causes by our effort to get more members through our offer to register and get free PDF file edition of this magazine. The lucky think is that the total members count is rather stable, and lies about 80 persons on a national basis.



hobby and to be a member of a fantastic pack of Amiga freaks that hangs on the IRC channels #amiga, #amigaworld and #AmigaWeb.

What status do we make in general for 2008? A lot has happened. A next generation Amiga has been launched at last, hopefully soon followed by more new models. Again there is hope for the Amiga events AmiGBG in Gothenburg and AmiTron in Trondheim for instance, and the future looks brighter than at the same time last year. Again we see a little clear, blue sky, and look: Behind that cloud the sun is trying to shine through, once again! Look: Behind those clouds, the sky still is blue! And our hope is blue as that clear, blue sky!

What status do YOU make for 2008? Well, how much do you really care about your Amiga? I am HAPPY if you only read these words, but shoul dyou be? The other day I found my old Amiga 3000 in the attic, and

What status do we make for AmigaWeb and for #amiga guide magazine? It still is hard to get help from people that has both time, interest and enthusiasm to do both news item writing at web and to produce articles for the mag. We need help from somebody who has time, who bothers, who wants, who cares to get an interesting

nowadays I use it for IRCing. You better believe me: It works like a charm! This may be an example for others...

No matter what status NAF, AG, #AG, AmigaWeb, World of Amiga freaks or YOU does for 2008, a special greeting stands above all:

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year

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About this magazine

the #amiga guide is the English sister magazine of the Norwegian Amiga magazine Amigaguiden (the Amiga Guide) which I have been the editor of for 16 years now and running.

the #amiga guide, or #AG for short, is produced mostly using one or several Amiga models, just the way Amigaguiden, or AG for short, has been produced since 1992. It all started back then.

We have a very strong community at IRC, and we want to mention #AmigaWeb and #amigaguide especially. Both channels are at the EFnet IRC Network.

We also want to give credits to #amiga of EFnet, and to give thanks to Opus of #amiga (Hi, Andrew) for giving us his permission to use the name of this magazine.

Please visit:
amigaguide.net
amigaweb.net

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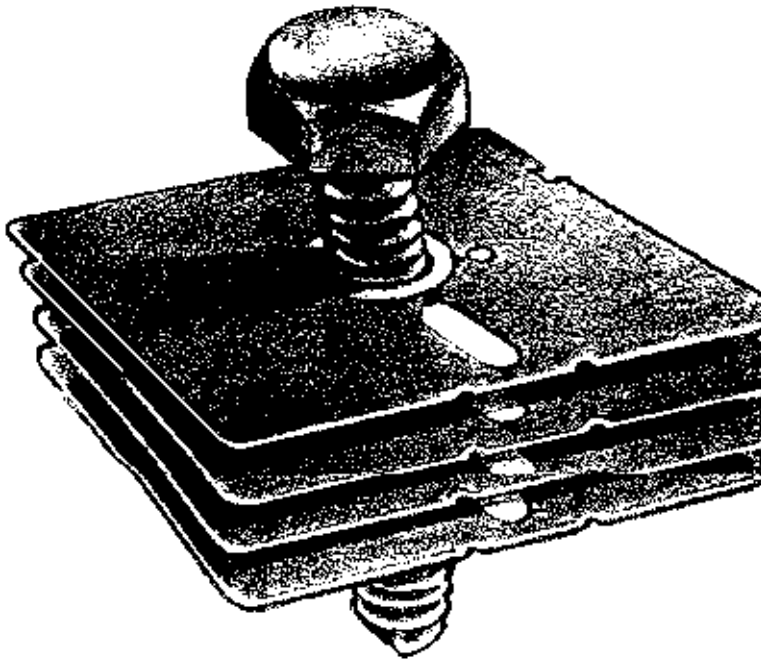
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The views of expressed in this magazine are those of the author of each piece, they do not necessarily reflect the views of the editor or other contributors.

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RNO Records 109

Almost 3 years has passed since last time Ghetto B-Boyz released music under the RNO Records label. Now they are back with a minimalistic techno thing.

You can download Nescafe (and the old releases) from <http://www.po-rno.fi/records.php>.

Source: polarboing.com



Amiga and C64 music in MP# format

Almost everything ever made of music on the Amiga is now available at paula8364.com, and the whole of the HVSC collection is sampled as well and available as MP3 at 6581-8580.com

Source: polarboing.com



Sam440 price ready in Sweden

Hast-enterprises has a price ready for mainboard and almost ready system with AmigaOS4.1. Their web site is at <http://hast-enterprises.se/shop/index.php?shop&150&82>

Source: polarboing.com



William Jacobsen AS sponsorship

The company William Jacobsen AS, Mo i Rana, that runs two gas stations north to Mo i Rana, has as reported in last issue of Amigaguiden magazine confirmed their sponsorship with Norwegian Amiga Association for 2008.

Krutå AS has confirmed sponsorship

The company Krutå AS, that is a car dealer in Mo i Rana, has confirmed their sponsorship for 2008 with Norwegian Amiga Association, as reported in last Amigaguiden magazine.

Krutå AS is now one of NAF "Amiga Event Sponsors 2008". The agreement has a value of NOK 1000,- for Norwegian Amiga Association.

NAF wants to thank the sponsors for having faith in us, and we hope all our supporters shows our sponsors special good-will.

Source: amiga.no



William Jacobsen AS then is one of NAF «Amiga Event Sponsors» for 2008, and this sponsorship is worth 1000 NOK for NAF.orening.

NAF wants to thank the sponsors for having faith in us, and we hope all our supporters shows our sponsors special good-will.

Source: amiga.no



Referate from staff meeting

The referent has written a referate from this seasons first staff meeting in Norwegian Amiga Association.

Referate from staff meeting in NAF
Location: IRC channel #naf-styre at EFnet
Date: Sunday, 25th of May 2008 6 PM

Members:

- Tommy
- Stian
- Vidar
- Michael

It is stated that the staff meeting can take decisions, due to the fact that overhalf of the members is present.

This budget for 2008 was accepted:
<http://62.101.233.16/~storm/2008/05/BudsjettnAF2008.txt> with the comments that the

In mind of NAF Fund it was 100 % vote for gving one big sum of money for years 2004 to 2008 to an Amiga related project, in stead of one small sum for each year. OWB was warmed considered of all the staff members, and a proposal to give OWB the NAF Fund money for all 5 years was totally accepted 100 %.

Withthe NAF 15 year anniversary last year (1992 to 2007) it was decided to give all members a gift of a total sum of about 2-3000 NOK if budget can take it, instead og udinh money on a marketign product that we are supposed to sell. The last action has given us bad experience earlier on.

It was as short briefing on NAF BBQ Party 2008.

The first members meeting was decided held on Sunday, June the 1th.

Referent: Tommy Strand

Source: amiga.no

Advent time

It is time for advent, but somebody has forgotten something important for amiga.no :=)

Our beloved foreman Mao, aka Erlend, made a little advent card under his development of the original version of this web site when he went a html course in Kongssvinger., Norway.



Do you guess who it is?

Check out Trashcan Dept!! =)

<http://62.101.233.16/~storm/Amigaguiden/Trashcan54.pdf>

Now let us all hope that foreman Mao some day finds out he did a mistake, and then sends us all the advent card from NAF from his home up there in th ecold north =)

Comments on «Advent time»

Foreman Mao is on the chair
By: Foreman Mao
Date: 2008-12-12 12:36:09

The advent card is here: <http://amiga.no/jul/>

Feel free to comment on any news item at amiga.no and at [amigaweb.net!](http://amigaweb.net)



domains are priced too high and that all expenses only shall be considered after income has arrived as expected in budget.

It is 100 % voted for that Amigaguiden magazine should be 100 % colour pages.

Budget is approved as only recommended according to all expenses.

The problem is that he has forgotten to put this up this year, so now his advent card is strongly missed by the thousand of reades of amiga.no =)

This is why I try to do the damage small by releasing a taste of Amigaguiden issue 4-2008, namely the Trashcan Dept. page, wher we recognized one of the customers down at the local grocery store.

Did you know?

Did you know that this magazine is made using PageStream DTP Program at the AmigaOne using AmigaOS4?

: news

WANTED:

Admins/journalists/news writers

The #amiga guide magazine and the Amiga news site AmigaWeb.net needs your help! We need help for writing articles for the magazine, and for writing news items for AmigaWeb.net, as well as other admin tasks.

We also needs trusted operators as well as users for our IRC channels at both EFnet and Amiganet IRC networks.

If you have some spare time and think a hobby around the Amiga commuinity sounds interesting, please contact alef at IRC channel #AmigaWeb at EFnet.



A floppy disc of history

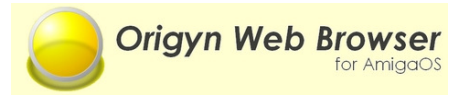
When Commodore made the first Amgia, the Amiga 1000, they sold the Kickstart on a floppy disc. A known fact has been that the Kickstart disc never was cleaned good, so it still keeps secrets that the developers left there. Now one Michael has succeeded recreate what was on the floppy, and there was some stuff that never saw light of day since 1985.

<http://www.pagetable.com/?p=34>

Source: safir.amigaos.se

08/09 with all the Champions League teams.

Source: safir.amigaos.se



OWB Updates

OWB for OS3.9 and 4.1

OWB, the Amiga browser, once again is updated. The big surprise this time is that OWW has released a new version for 68020+ Amiga's running AmigaOS3.9! The new version numbers are 2.17 (OS4.1) and 1.4 (68020+)

<http://strohmayr.org/owb/>

Source: safir.amigaos.se



SWOS, season 08/09

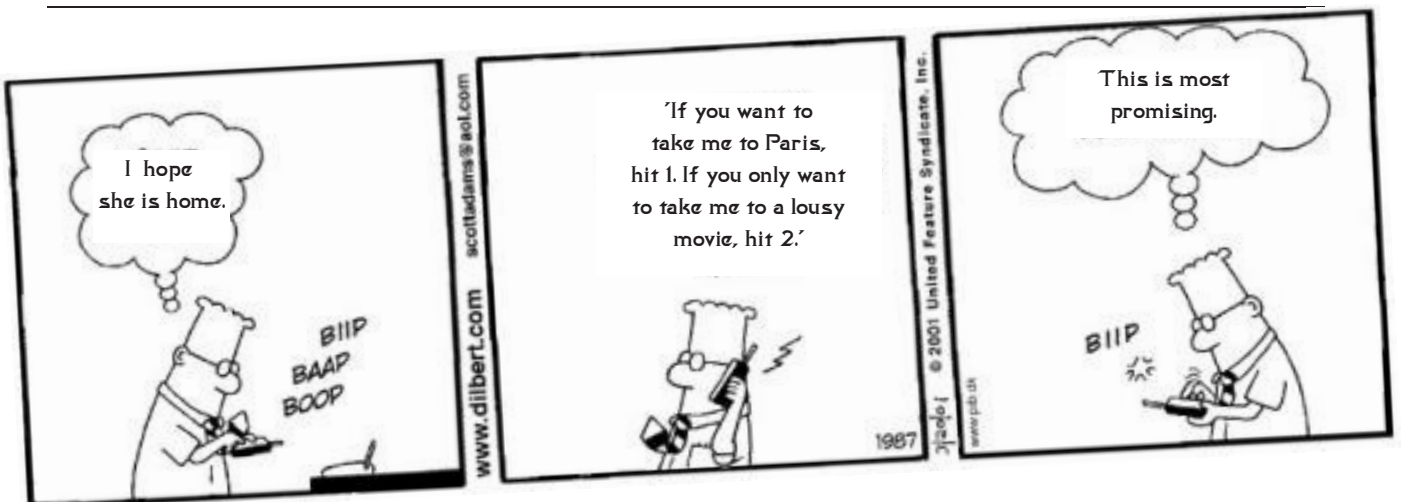
Do you like Sensible World of Soccer?

Then you should look here:

<http://synchronated.110mb.com/updates.htm>

|

There you will find updated teams which for instance plays in international season



Norway, while a DVD player bought in USA is coded to Region 1. You can of course buy DVD players that are "zone free", and that plays any DVD movie, no matter which region. According to European law, all DVD players that are sold in Europe shall be coded to Region 2 as the standard region.

What is Region 2? Region 2, also known as R2, is a code that suggests the geographical area of Europe, Japan, Greenland, South Africa and the Middle East included Egypt. All the DVD movies marked with Region 2 can be played on any DVD player produced for Region 2. Movies marked as Region 2 movies, except the ones specially produced for the Japanese market, all uses PAL as standard.

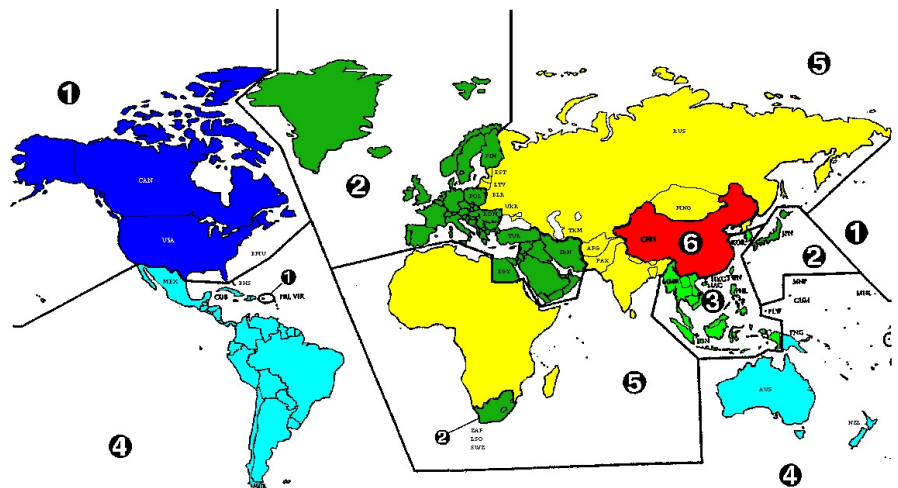
What is Region 0? Region 0 is also known as "Region All" or "Region Free". Movies marked with Region 0 is compatible with any DVD player, as the are coded to be

Small and big about DVD

What do you need to know about DVD? Erlend teaches us...



Text and photo: Erlend Kristiansen
erlend@minigal.net



What is DVD? What is NTSC? What is a region? What is aspect ratio? This is greek for you? Ok, then I am going to learn you some greek today. I have collected a few expressions and terms which will hopefully help you with some questions about DVD films and so on.

DVD, Digital Versatile Disc, looks like a CD, but you can store about 4,7 GB of data on it. DVD's that are bought ready produced, like a movie for instance, can contain the double amount of data, about 9,4 GB of data.

When DVD was brand new, it was short for Digital Video Discs, but after a while they found out all the use of a DVD, the name was changed to Digital Versatile Disc.

Why is there different regions of DVD's? The region arrangements on the DVD movies was forced by different film studios due to different launch times of the movies around the world. In USA for instance, a movie comes for DVD almost instantly after it hits the cinemas, but in Norway you would have to wait up to one year.

Because of this the regions arrangements were made, that ensures that you can not buy a movie in USA (Region 1) and then play in your DVD player in Norway (Region 2). To make this work, there was also put different regions into the DVD players. So when you buy a DVD player on the shop at the corner, then this mostly is a DVD player that is coded to Region 2 if you live in

Overview over the regions

- Region 1 - USA and Canada
- Region 2 - Europe, Japan, Middle East, Greenland, South Africa and Egypt
- Region 3 - Taiwan, Korea, Philippines, Indonesia and Hong Kong
- Region 4 - Mexico, South America, Central America, Australia, New Zealand, Caribbean and Pacific Islands
- Region 5 - Russia, Eastern Europe, India, most of Africa, North Korea and Mongolia
- Region 6 - China

: movie and sound

available in any region. Region 0 movies are often produced in NTSC format (US TV standard), instead of the European PAL standard. If you want to see a NTSC movie on a TV, it has to be compatible with NTSC. If your TV is not compatible with NTSC, it will not show the colours correctly.

What is NTSC and PAL? I won't go too detailed into this, I will only give a brief explanation. There are mostly two standards of decoding video for TV. Europe, Region 2, uses PAL, while North America, Region 1, uses NTSC. PAL is short for Phase Alternating Line, and shows 50 half images on screen per second, while each image has 625 lines. NTSC is short for National Television System Committee, and shows 60 half images per second, with a vertical resolution of 525 lines.

Because of the different standards of the coding between NTSC and PAL, there is a little difference of the playing time of the respective movies. PAL encoded titles play about 4 % quicker than the same movie coded in NTSC. This also explains why there is a difference between the playing time of a Region 1 and a Region 2 edition of the same movie. A Region 2 movie that has a playing time of 2 hours and 5 minutes, will play for 2 hours and 10 minutes in the Region 1 version.

Then what is best of NTSC and PAL? Well, none of these is better than the other by any evidence.

The visual experience

What is aspect ratio? Aspect ratio refers to the dimensions (width to height) of the image you see on your TV screen. There are two basic forms of aspect ratio: Full screen and Wide screen.

What is Full screen? This is the normal square screen image that was normal just until recently on TV's. This aspect ratio is called 4:3 or 1.33:1. This means that the image is 1.33 times as wide as it is tall. Full screen movies will take all the screen of a standard full screen TV. When you look at such a movie with a Wide screen TV, then you will see black areas on both sides of the image (left and right side).

What is Wide screen? Wide screen is the characteristic rectangular image that is preferred in movie presentations since the 1950's. There exists several aspect ratios, but the most common ones are expressed as WS 1,66:1, WS 1,77:1 (also known as

16:9), WS 1,85:1 and 2.35:1. All these ratios are referring to the width compared to the height, just as in full screen aspect ratios. This means that 1.78:1 means that the image is 1.78 times as wide as it is tall. On a standard TV a wide screen movie will be presented with black areas over and under the image. How high these black areas are, depends of what aspect ratio that is used for that particular movie.

Why do I still see black stripes on my wide screen TV? Wide screen TV's has an aspect ratio of 1.77:1, also known as 16:9. Wide screen movies with a higher aspect ratio than this, for instance 1.85:1 or 2.35:1, will still show black areas over and under the image, but these areas will of course be much smaller than if you looked at the same movie on a standard 4:3 "square" TV.

The audiovisual experience

What is Dolby Digital? Dolby Digital is a system that is capable of processing multi channel digital sound, coded with a technology known as AS-3, Dolby Digital is often written DD in short.

What is Dolby Digital (1.0) Mono? This is 1 channel of digital sound. On a surround system this will be directed to the front center speaker.

What is Dolby Digital (2.0) Mono? This is maybe a little confusing, but this is also 1 channel of digital sound. The same channel is directed to the front left and right speakers. Very few movies uses this format.

What is Dolby Digital (2.0) Stereo? This is 2 channels of digital sound. One channel is directed into right front speaker, the other to the left front speaker.

What is Dolby Digital Surround? This was first known as Dolby Surround. This is a technique that mixes the sound from a standard two channels signal. From these two channels sound is produced for several channels, like a center and a rear channel. If you have only two loudspeakers these two channels will automatically be redirected to the two channel outputs you are equipped with.

What is Dolby Digital (4.0)? This is 4 channels with digital sound. On a surround system the sound will be directed to left and right front speakers, and to left and right rear speakers.

What is Dolby Digital (4.1)? This is same as Dolby Digital (4.0), but you also have a low frequency effect channel (shown by the .1 in the name). This extra channel is also known as LFE (Low Frequency Effect Channel). On a surround system the sound will be directed to left and right front speakers, to the left and right rear speakers and the LFE channel is sent to a subwoofer.

What is Dolby Digital (5.1)? This is 5 channels of digital sound, plus a LFE channel. The sound will be directed to left and right front speakers, left and right rear speakers, low frequencies will be sent to your subwoofer, while speech will be directed to your center speaker.

What is Dolby Digital 5.1 EX? This is same as Dolby Digital 5.1 only with additional support for a rear center speaker. The signal to this loudspeaker is mixed from the left and right rear channels.

What is Dolby Digital 6.1? This is 6 channels of digital sound.. In a way this exactly the same as Dolby Digital 5.1 EX, just that the receiver has an own dedicated channel for the rear center speaker instead of mixing the sound.

What is DTS? DTS is short for Digital Theatre Systems. DTS is a rival to Dolby Digital 5.1 and has close to the same specifications. The biggest difference is that DTS has a more narrow dynamic sound spectrum, but a higher quality of the decoding of the sound.

What is DTS ES? This is the same as DTS, but with support for a rear center speaker. Can I watch a DVD with Dolby Digital 5.1 sound even if I don't have a surround system? Yes, you can. Dolby Digital will mix down the audio signal and adjust it to the number of speakers that you are using. Can I watch a DVD with DTS sound without a DTS decoder? No, sorry. To take advantage of DTS you need a dedicated decoder in your DVD player, your receiver or your TV.

I sure hope this was not too technical for my readers, but that you learnt something new. If you like me are movie and sound freaks, then you will understand why I actually buy movies instead of downloading it from the internet. Every time I am shopping, I look at for good offers at places that sells DVD's, then I go straight home for that DVD and surround experience.



FROHE WEIHNACHT



Trashcan

This column contains rumours, half truths, philosophy and pure nonsense mixed with direct lies. The #amiga guide only takes partly responsibility for the contents of this page..



The Trashcna Dept. could not avoid noticing this person who we caught buying grocery at the local food store.

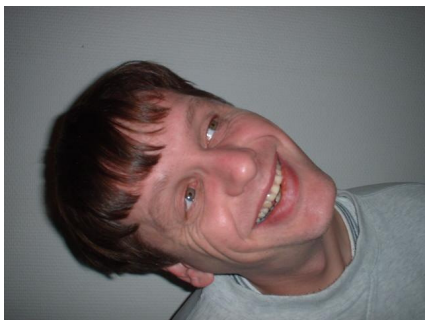
He looked kind of familiar, we thought....

Do you recognize him by any chance?

Photo:
Tommy Strand

Babylonian Twins

In the cradle of civilisations, aka Iraq according to some people, a so far unknown Amiga game was coded but never published under the tough times of sanctions



**Texts from the Internet
Tommy Strand**

From the forum English Amiga Board (EAB):
Have you guys heard of Babylonian Twins? I found these vids on YouTube:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3dft1KbC3pw>
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TZIQBAIgcBk>
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qyQ8BcPJA8> and so on...

It sounds and looks like an Amiga game and seems to be AWESOME!

Murtadha T. Salman already confirmed that he made this game, together with his friend Rabah Shibab and Mahir Hisham.

I am also the president of LEGENDARY DESIGN TECHNOLOGIES, the company that actually owns the rights to this game. First of all, let me assure you – the game is REAL. We never released it because the environment of the Amiga had deteriorated so badly that the game would have never made it commercially.

I do have the disk images—in fact, I remember not that long ago I definitely created an Amiga of the demo.

I am torn about releasing the full game - but the demo I most definitely would not have an issue with.

I can also assure you that this is one awesome game. Right now, the only place you can play it is at the Personal Computer Museum, which is part of the charm of coming here and trying out new things. Kids that are comfortable with Mario seem to have little difficulty, although there are some advanced tricks in this game that take time to figure out.

Anyways, sounds like there is a lot of interest—if you have any other questions, let me know.

One of Babylonian Twins developers:
I'd like to introduce myself ... My Nam is Murtadha , I am the guy who did the graphics of (Babylonian Twins), I am very

impressed to see all this interest of the game after all these years , it's just like bringing back the amazing feeling of the old days of Amiga.

I got an email yesterday from (cody) regarding the game , and I was so surprised to know the there is some people in this world still interested in the amiga games ...I went through the comments of the people here and I've noticed that some people have doubts about developing Amiga game in Iraq , I just want to assure you that we developed this game in 1993-1994 in Baghdad and we were preparing to develop another one , and we started already , I did all the graphics of that one , but the programming never finished . and you know what happened to the Amiga market that time .

And yes , most of the team members left Iraq , I left in 1997 and I am in Australia now , the main programmed and the support programmer in Canada now ...the only guy I don't know about is the musician (Dr. Mahir) ...I hope he made it out somehow

I wrote to RABAH (the programmer) yesterday regarding this issue but I didn't get any response from him , maybe he is away in a vacation or something.

Any ways , just want to say thanks for the interest of the game , and wish you good luck of getting a copy of it soon

Comment: Well after watching the videos on YouTube Murtadha, i am astounded that this came never saw the light of day because it truly is a Class A job!! And i can certainly speak for all other Amiga gamers here when i say that!

Hi Guys
Thanks all for the positive feedback about Babylonian Twins, it is great to see such a strong Amiga community around till this day. My name is Rabah Shihab, I am the author, lead developer and copyright owner (Registered at the Library of Congress: TXu000756385) for Babylonian Twins.

I developed the game with my friends Murtadha and Mahir in Baghdad between 1993 and 1994. I contacted many Amiga publishers at that time but all refused to deal with us because there was an economic sanctions on Iraq. The only

positive response I received was from Syd Bolton of Legendary Design Technologies at that time. We eventually signed an agreement with Legendary to publish the game but they never published the game, and the more dad part is that we never got a response (positive or negative) from Syd since that time despite our many attempts to reach him. We considered our agreement void since that time. Syd has no control over this game. Syd, please contact me at rabahshihab at yahoo dot ca to discuss this.

I currently live in Vancouver, BC and I still have the source code (MC68000 assembly), graphics, music, sounds, and binaries (CD32 Amiga DOS format) for the game. The game is complete and my brother posted videos of the 5 stages on YouTube last year. I have considered many times to port the game to the PC but never got the time. I am recently considering porting the game to the iPhone and I am trying to find a financial sponsor for this project.

If you have other ideas on now get this game out to the rest of the world, please contact me. There are stories behind the development of this game, from the limited hardware resources (no HD, only 512kb of memory, using TV instead of a monitor... etc), to the frequent power interruptions, to the very hot weather (over 50 degree in the summer), to the sad responses we received from publishers because we were in Baghdad, to the lack for technical resources (books, internet, bulletin boards, developers community... etc) to build such game in the first place.

I will see if I can publish a demo of the game for the loyal Amiga community to the enjoy. I will keep you posted.
Regards, Rabah Shihab

Syd now says in a forum post that he has his own views about the deal, and he gets a firm reply beneath.

Another member from Mesopotamia Syd, I'm not a lawyer and I don't even remember the details of the contract, all I know is that I was there and saw Rabah and Murtadha working day and night because they had only one Amiga, I saw them struggling with all hard life in crazy Baghdad under sanction and being creative and motivated despite all troubles that faced them daily.

Money is not the issue here, all members of Mesopotamia are very well established now beyond shareware, it's more a morality issue especially from a fellow Canadian.

Re: Against the Kingdom of Death Another game in the level of Shadow of the Beast was being developed by Mesopotamia Software, two huge stages were completed each is a full Amiga disk. The game was inspired by the epic of Gilgamesh. I was the designer and programmer and the graphics was done by 3 artists (Ali was the main artist and concept artist of the game and Murtadha and Nasr did the 2nd level). I still have the source code and the data but the running binary disk is not working anymore, I need to fix them with XCopy or something but I don't have the tools or the time for that.

Re: Mesopotamia Software today. We are working on PS3 now as a contracting company and developers for PS3 and 360. You could find details about Mesopotamia here www.mesopotamia.ca, Amiga is mentioned more than once on our website, we will never forget!

Comment from a Swedish Amiga user: I remember seeing this game for the first time about a year ago on YouTube and was amazed at how they could've completed it under those conditions. At least my understanding was that this hardware was hard to come by in that part of the world even in 1994, let alone any technical documents and a community with which to exchange and build ideas.

It would be interesting to hear some development stories, and of how you got hold of the Amiga, floppy disks, tools and documentation in the first place!

Update on Babylonian Twins Hi Guys
Just an update on this. I am working on a Amiga demo for this game. I just need to setup an Amiga emulator with all required tools. I already have an Amiga DOS version of the demo, I just need to produce and ADF version. I will update you on this. Also, after all the positive responses I received on this forum and on youtube, I am taking the porting efforts more seriously. I have re-registered the domain Babyloniantwins.com and I will update it with my future plans.

Comments on the game

Holy wow!

wow, looks&sounds great indeed!

Hail for the whole team behind that game. Extreme circumstances, and still they are creating somewhat special. Respect.

Looks pretty ace actually. After completing the demo several times I just want more.

Only the first version to tinker with, as tapper wrote in the readme. There are some graphics glitches when you jump. And the game freezes sometime, if you jump through the tube systems too often.

But hey, it's works and the game is really in 50 FPS. After a quick test in WinUAE (100Hz) i thought it's maybe in 25 FPS, because the scrolling is sooo fast.

Wow, can't believe I missed this thread! What a story. Great how the team is now reunited on the internet!! This game certainly does look and sound quite polished.

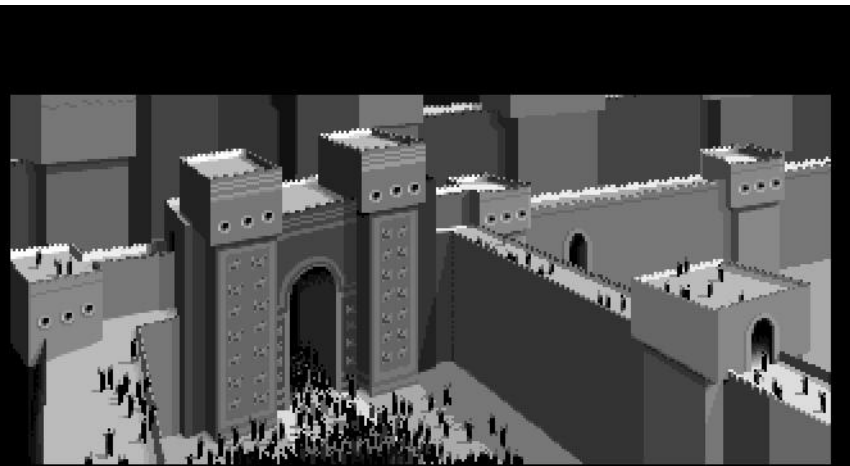
Demo looks really promising, catchy music.

I played this for a bit last night and was really impressed with it, scrolling, colours audio and playability all seemed top notch to me.

The demo plays real nice - keeping me happy this evening. An all round impressive game, and I'm seriously digging that music.

The scrolling is the fastest i have seen on amiga. Even sonic is not that fast !

Wow !!!



BABYLON 598 B.C.



Also, I am answering some interview questions I received about the story behind the game, I will update that too. For all future communication about the game, please contact me directly, I have resolved the pending issues with Syd regarding the publishing rights for the game. Thanks Rabah

The music guy:
Hello All Let me introduce myself, I'm 'Mahir Hisham', the music and sound effects guy I was contacted by my old friend Rabah today when he found me accidentally on facebook after all these years, I'm happy for seeing all these posts about the game, happy to see the appreciation of effort, but on the same time, sad cause I think that this appreciation came out too late. It is interesting to have the game on the market -someway- at last, not for money, not for pride, but to get as many people to know how our poor Iraq under sanction was having such creative minds that were also

HD, hooked up to a TV using a TV modulator, and for me using a very rare piece of hardware that I was possessing those days which was an "Audio-In interface" so I could include all these traditional Iraqi music instruments some of which were sampled from real instruments, and some were from old recordings that were on LPs.... and for the records, I was allowed to use only 64Kb for each music piece...!! Anyway, composing

under sanction we were a small group of collage kids having simple daily afternoon meetings at rabah's house, using simple equipments of Amiga 500 with no

and playing music was a hobby for me rather than a career as I was in the medical school back then.

Audai my friend... I wonder why you didn't mention the music of your -not finished- game 'Gilgamish'... as I remember, it took me a considerable time and effort to develop, and I consider it was the best of my work

Hi All

I am finally done with the demo, it is available now on <http://www.babyloniantwins.com> . It took me some time to refresh my memory about the code, MC68000 assembly programming and other Amiga stuff. Anyway, enjoy the play and excuse the poor English inside the game. You can leave your feedback at the site.

As for my future plans for the game, I will try to find a way to get it out to the mass. I still think the mobile platform is best option considering the hardware specs, I am still researching which mobile platform specifically to choose.



As for the full Amiga version, I can not release it now because doing so could affect my future deals with potential publishers. I think it is different when you approach them with a non-released game vs. a port.

Unfortunately, this game was never published on the Amiga but we have invested good (and hard) time developing it. Although we don't need (or expect) money now for our past efforts, we all want to see the game played by as many people as possible so they can appreciate the efforts done at the place and time.

The good thing is that I am still in the software business, Murtađa is an architect and Mahir is a brain surgeon I will do my best to work on this project beside my full time job.

Thanks again for all the positive responses. Regards, Rabah

Interview with Rabah Shihab

(Interview realized by David Brunet - november 2008)

Hello Rabah, could you please introduce yourself to our readers ?

My name is Rabah Shihab, I was born in Baghdad in December 1972. Lived there till 1994, the same year I finished my computer engineering degree from University of Baghdad and completed the development of Babylonian Twins. I moved to Jordan where I started an entertainment software division for a large company there, then moved to Dubai where I co-founded a leading multimedia and Internet consulting firm (Cosmos Software) with some friends (including most Mesopotamia team), there I led a team of about 25 creative and technical professionals in developing many pioneering multimedia applications in that region. I currently live with my wife and two children in the amazing Grouse Mountain area in Vancouver, Canada. I am working during the day for Oracle doing enterprise software and during the evenings and weekends on my own new media and social software projects. My hobbies include hiking and Ping Pong.

When and how did you discover the Amiga ?

The dominant personal and family computers in Iraq were the MSX, Sinclair and NEC (all Z80 based), the reason was they were imported and subsidized by the government. There was a strong gaming and developer community around these machines. I bought my first computer (an MSX) in 1985 and I wrote my first program

(a simple game in Basic) a year later. Not satisfied with the quality and performance of my game, I tried to learn Z80 but that did not help much. I felt I needed a more powerful computer to satisfy my creativity.

In the late eighties, some people started to import the Commodore Amiga, those were mainly above middle class people who were also lucky enough to be able to travel since travel outside the country was officially banned during that time.

Gradually, video tapes of Amiga games and demos started to spread in computer community and people started to realize the power of that machine. I remember the first time I saw Defender of the Crown and Deluxe Paint on video tapes I felt in love with that machine and was determined to own one. It was however not affordable to the average income people. With some saving and hardworking I was able to buy one, if I remember correctly that was in 1989. I spent most of my time on the Amiga appreciating and analyzing games and understanding the power of that machine, the only two games I spent good time on were SpeedBall and Kick Off, mostly competing with my brother and friends.

You're from Iraq. What was the situation of the Amiga in Iraq in the 1980's and 1990's ?

In the early nineties, the Amiga community started to boom and more local computer companies started to specialize in the Amiga. Many imported the Amiga 500 and then A1200 in quantities. The prices were still pretty high (at least three or four times their advertised price in Amiga magazines at that time). However more people started to buy and prices started to drop. The number of Amiga owners were in thousands but I don't think it exceeded three or four thousands, this is just my guess. Software were mostly pirated, they were coming from Jordan and some Gulf countries. Some companies buy the games pirated then apply their own disk protection and then re-sell them at higher prices, there were no copyright law in Iraq.

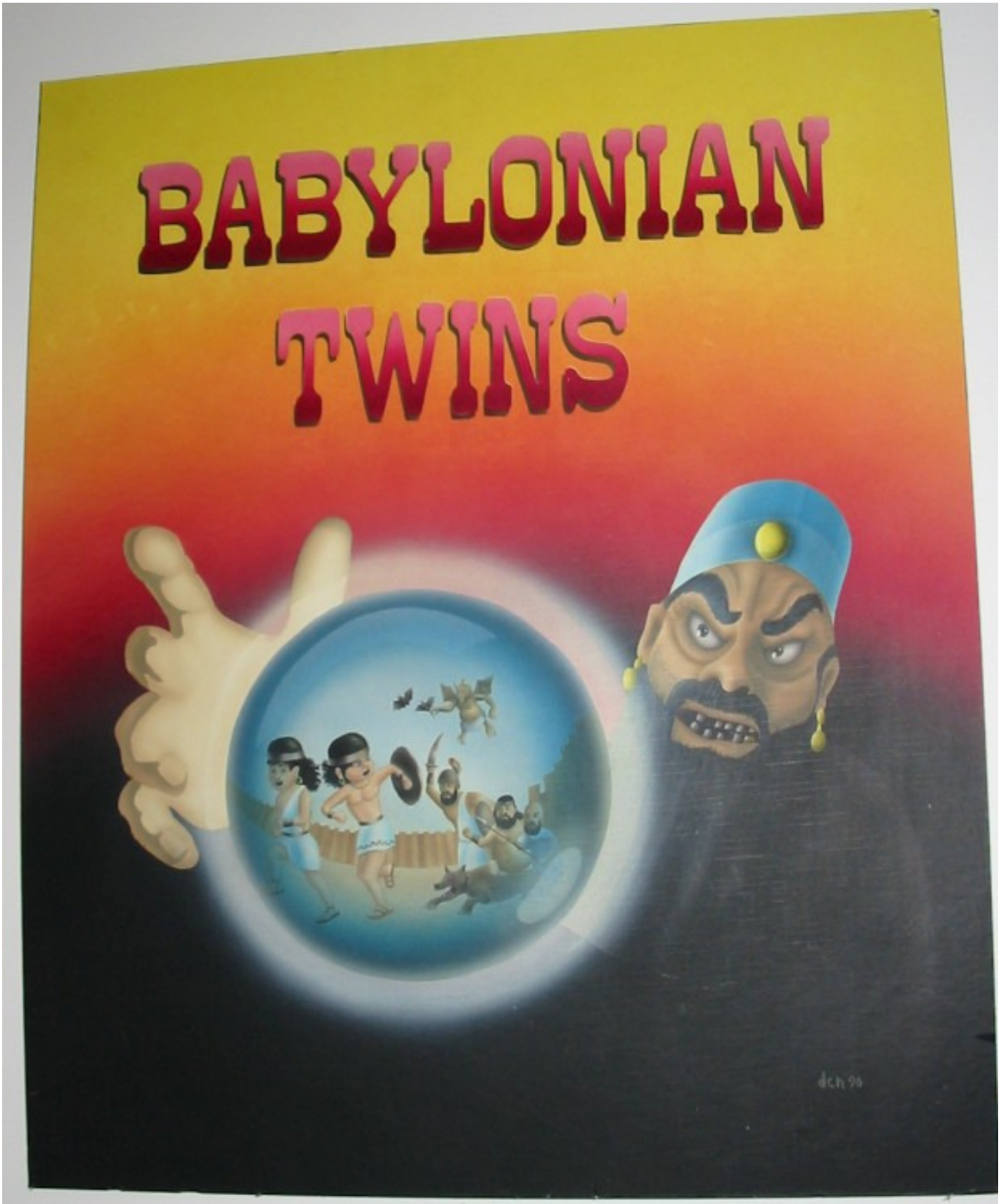
As for Amiga publications, due to the economic sanctions, scientific publications were banned to enter the country and unfortunately people conducting the screening of imports often included Amiga books and magazines in the ban. However some Amiga owners who can afford to

travel usually buy these magazines and manage to get some into the country. Once in, photocopies circulate among the community and some lucky people get access to the originals, but that is usually after few months of the publication date. As for Amiga books, they were very rare, may be, in the whole country, there were only two or three original copies of the Amiga Hardware Reference manual and the Amiga ROM Kernel books. We, Mesopotamia team, were among the very few lucky people who had access to them. Without these books, Babylonian Twins would never have existed.

In 2007, your brother posted videos of your game, Babylonian Twins, on YouTube. Could you present the game ?

Babylonian Twins is both a platform and a puzzle game. It is about the story of the twin princes of Babylon Nasir and Blasir and their quest to protect the throne of their father from the evil magic of Babylon's great sorcerer. The game has five levels, starting from the prison where the two princes were thrown in by the great sorcerer, moving to the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, Nimrud in Assyria, Ishtar Gate and the Processional Street and then to the great palace of Babylon. Most of the game graphics were drawn from authentic history books and the game original music use traditional middle eastern instruments. Actually, part of my intention behind building the game was to show the world that Iraq, is not a country of wars and sanctions, but it is a country of history, art and great civilizations. We relied on authentic history books to do the game graphics and we used traditional local instruments in the music.

The game uses unique role playing approach to guide the two characters in their quest. The player switches between the two twins to overcome game obstacles and solve its puzzles. Nasir jumps higher and uses a sword and Blasir has lower jumps and uses his fists. The game has inspiration from two popular games. It has the game play and smooth multidimensional scrolling of Team17's Superfrog and has the puzzles and role playing approach of Konami's Knightmare II (Maze of Galious). I have put more information about the game on www.babyloniantwins.com including a down loadable demo.



Could you present the team behind Babylonian Twins ?

Myself, Murtadha Salman and Mahir Hisham are the core team behind this

game. We were part of a group we called Mesopotamia which included Auday Hussien and Ali Aboud who were working on another game that was unfortunately not finished at that time.

My friend Murtadha Salman did the graphics, he was a student at the Architecture department at the University of Baghdad. His brother Nasr did the game ending graphics. Interesting now that

Murtadha was a pure artist with no computer graphics experience at all at that time, he actually did not own a computer. He was coming to my house once or twice a week, where he learned Deluxe Paint and did all the game graphics.

Mahir Hisham, another old friend from high school, composed all the game original music. Mahir is an talented musician, he was a medical student at the university of Baghdad (now a brain surgeon). Mahir had his own Amiga and a little sound digitizer which helped us doing the traditional music instruments.

I designed the game, coded it and project managed the whole development efforts. I used AsmOne for coding, all code done in assembly with direct access to Amiga chipset with DMA programming, etc. I also wrote a powerful game level editor, that we used in the other Mesopotamia game too.

Mesopotamia team also include, my friend Aday Hussein was working on another game around the epic of Gigamish, he was working with another friend Ali Aboud who was also an architecture student at the same university. Ali did the Mesopotamia logo (Winged Bull) you see in Babylonian Twins intro. Unfortunately, the other game was not completed at that time.

Do you have contact with other members of the Mesopotamia Group now ? What do they do now ?

After that game, I moved to Jordan and them to Dubai were I started a multimedia and Internet company with Aday. The company's name was Cosmos Software, Murtadha Salman and Ali were part of the team. The company had a great success in that region with many pioneering multimedia projects such as the first virtual museum for Dubai municipality, and a network of multimedia kiosks for British American tobacco, etc. Aday and myself moved to Vancouver Canada, Aday still in the game industry doing software for PS3 and other consoles. Ali recently joined us in Vancouver after spending few years in Dubai designing great architectural projects. Murtadha recently moved to Australia, he is an architect and he also spent few years in Dubai designing highrise buildings. We all have contacts through emails. I lost contact with Mahir few years ago but I recently found him on

Facebook, he recently moved to the States.

Could you tell us the conditions in which the game was created ?

The main thing to keep in mind that we developed the game during a tough period of the economic sanctions on Iraq. People were struggling to survive in order to eat and live under a roof, unemployment and inflation were really high. I remember during those times, People (including students and university graduates) were on the streets of Baghdad, either selling cigarettes or lining up in queues waiting to be picked up by the construction companies that were building Saddam's palaces. Probably Saddam's palaces were the main economic driver during that period. The pressure was high and each family member had to contribute and earn money. My father who had a good job before the sanctions was forced to open a grocery store to earn money, I was often helping him with my brother, at the same time I was a student at the university and had this game project going on.

Also, during those days, the infrastructure of the country was heavily destroyed after the first gulf war. Electricity was on for only few hours a day, and there was no predicable schedule, so we have to save our work constantly. We did not have a hard drive, and saving many times an hour a floppy drive was a nightmare. Added the complexity, my Amiga had only 500 KB of memory so I have to switch floppies many times during a compile cycle. I remember replacing my Amiga 500 floppy drive at least three times. Actually, there was a big market for refurbished Amiga floppy drives and people were creative in finding was to fix them and PC drives were converted to work on the Amiga.

Aday was lucky enough to have a 500 KB memory expansion, he shared it with me couple of times so I can complete my work. I only got my own 500 KB expansion after I was almost done with developing the game.

Add to that, Summer temperatures in Baghdad were like hell (reach over 50 degrees centigrade) and with unstable electricity, we can not switch A/C on all the time, so we have to managed not only our body temperature but also our hardware

temperature, I remember Amiga power supplies and TV modulators were often the victims.

I also spent difficult contacting publishers for the game. You need an official license to own or install a fax machine, and if you find a place to send a fax, you have to be careful when corresponding in English as that could put you in trouble of at least being questioned by the intelligence. I remember I received a fax one time from a publisher at the fax machine of one of my father's friends, he called us scared at night because he could not understand the fax content and thought it was something else. That was the last time I used a fax a return address.

Sending mails was another story by itself. We can only send letters, no disks. Therefore, in order to send a demo I have to mail it from Jordan, so I have to wait for people traveling there and who accept to take the risk to carry the disk through the border. Carrying disks through the border was completely prohibited and many times we needed to obtain an official license to do so.

My father helped me a lot in this game, although he was sick (kidney problem) he was going daily to the mail office to check for any incoming mails, I still remember once when a lady working at the post office felt sorry for him and arranged to call him when there was a mail. However, after all that effort, I was receiving many mails from publishers refusing to deal with us because of the economic sanctions on Iraq. that was really saddening.

My father was the key part of this game, without his support, understanding and belief in what I was doing I would never have developed Babylonian Twins. As a father myself, now I'm looking back at what he has done and think it was absolutely amazing. He had no understanding of computers or computer games, but he was probably more passionate than me for this project. I was lucky to have a great father who supported me during those times. My father passed away in Baghdad 2001 after kidney transplant operation, the reason was lack of good sanitization in the hospital because of economic sanctions.

: games

Do you think Babylonian Twins is the first video game made in Iraq ?

So far I have never heard about another commercial game developed before Babylonian Twins in Iraq or in that region, but knowing the people of Iraq I will not be surprised if I see someone who have done it before. Also, as I said, Mesopotamia group was working on another game during the same period, but it was not finished. The developer community in Iraq were connected and we knew each other, there were many other groups doing innovative business software and tools during that time.

How did you find an editor ? What is the legal situation about the game now ?

I assume you mean publisher here. To find publishers, I was basically scanning all Amiga magazines for publishers names and addresses. I almost contacted all Amiga publishers at that time, that was not easy and I have mentioned some of reasons above. Many publisher did not respond, but almost all the publishers that responded were satisfied with the quality but refused to deal with us due to the economic sanctions. I still have copies of some the letters I received.

The only positive response we received was from Legendary Design Technology from Canada, but unfortunately, after signing a licensing agreement with them, they failed to publish the game or even to notify us about the progress. That was shocking to all of us. I kept the game on my hard drives all that time.

The game copyright is registered in my name at the library of congress.

Put aside Babylonian Twins, do you have coded/created other software for the Amiga ?

Babylonian Twins was my first and main Amiga software project. I also developed a map editor for designing the game levels that we used for Mesopotamia's other game project.

Do you plan to publish the game for free for the Amiga community ?

The full game (including source code, graphics and binaries) is sitting on my hard drive (actually, on all hard drives of all

computers I owned during the last 14 years). Whenever I browse the game folders I remember the difficult times we spent developing it and feel sorry that it never saw the light. With the recent advances in hand-held and mobile devices and the widespread of digital distribution channels for games (iPhone store, XNA, etc.) I started to think seriously about porting it so it can reach a wider audience. Once I am done with that, I will consider releasing the game on the Amiga. To be honest, I never expected to see such a big Amiga audience till this date, I received thousands of hits on www.babyloniantwins.com after releasing the demo. I will definitely release the game on the Amiga one day, the game's value, strength and uniqueness are all on that platform. It is just a matter of time, I just don't want such move to affect my plans to publish it to wider audience on other platforms.

Do you plan to port the game on other platforms ?

Yes, I am researching few options now, some devices require working with publishers and I am trying to contact publishers now. The other alternative is to self-publish it on platforms like the iPhone, Android or XBox's.

Do you still have an Amiga ?

No, I don't, I have had to sell my Amiga at that time to pay the government to avoid enrolling in the military service. I still remember I sold it for \$250 US, that was in early 1995.

Do you still read news about the Amiga ? What do you know about the Amiga situation in the last years ?

Not so much, unfortunately. I kept following Amiga news in the early years after the demise of Commodore. I was buying computer magazines (Byte, CG world) just to scan them for the word "Amiga" which was often mentioned in the context of video rendering for CGI movies, etc., I was a PC users during that period but I was feeling a big relief when I read that word. Also, I didn't have Internet access till early 1996 when I was studying my master degree in computer engineering in Jordan, so there was basically no way for to keep in touch with the Amiga community.

You're in Canada since some years. Do you think you can come back to Iraq one day to work and live in "normal" conditions ?

I've actually visited Iraq in 2004, it was very sad situation, people are really tired there. The difficult times we spent in the early nineties are nothing compared to what people are seeing these days. Those poor people spent almost ten years more of sanctions and another war.

I am positive that things will get better there, Iraq is the cradle of civilizations and has been into wars and sanctions many times in history. Iraqi people are smart and creative, they know how to reinvent themselves. But I think this will take time and it won't probably happen in my lifetime. I however will keep my hope.

You have the last word...

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to tell our story. I would never have imagined when I was developing the game in Iraq back then that there will be a time where I can share my story with the Amiga community. Its wonderful how this great machine after so many years brought people from different cultures and countries together.

AmigaOS 4.1

AmigaOS 4.1



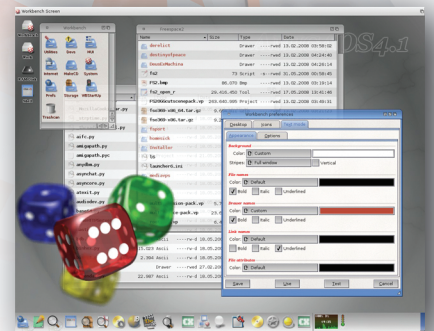
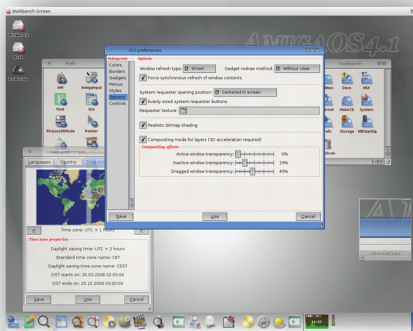
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greet's all readers

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Happy New Year!

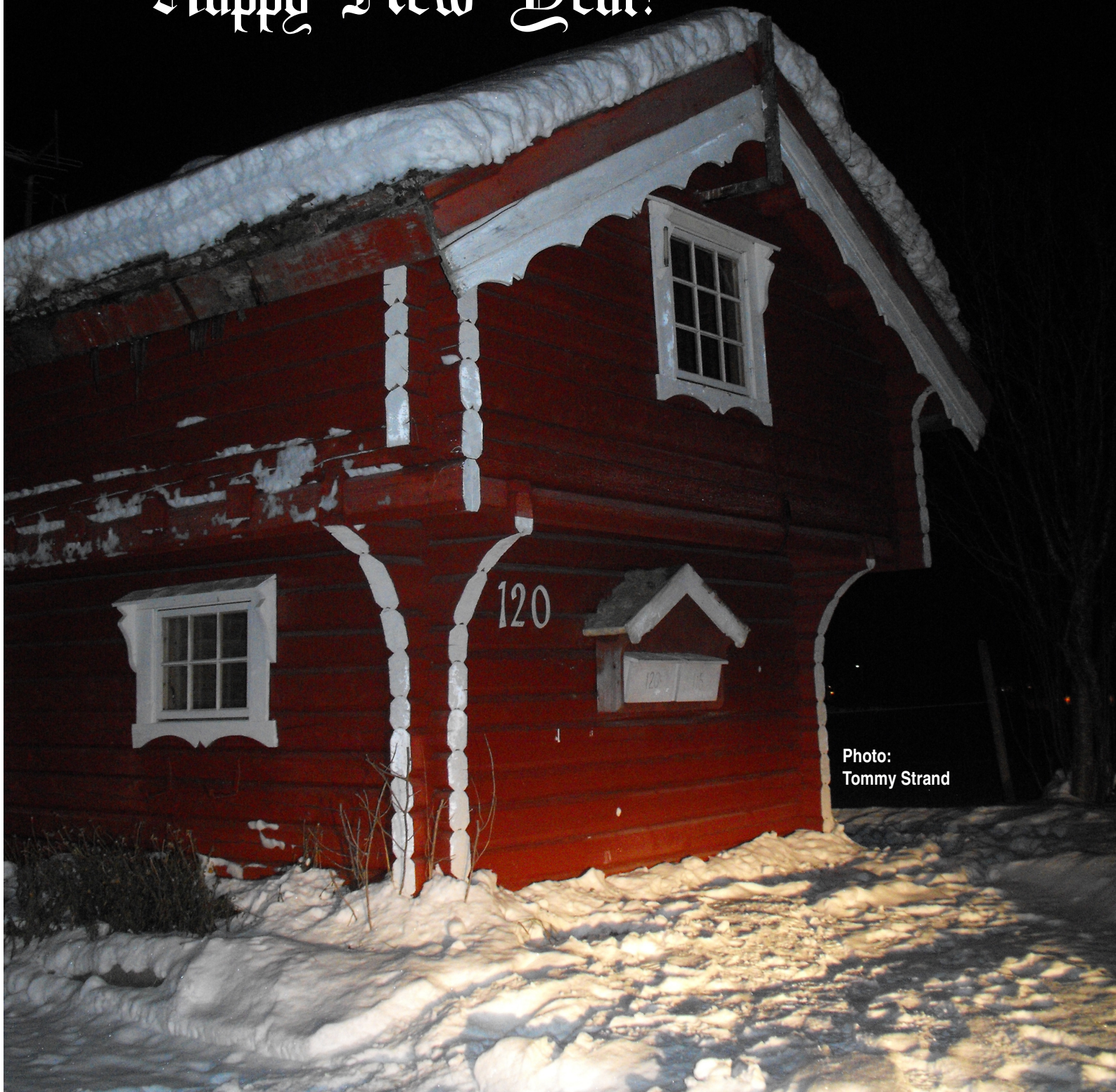


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