Media Point UPDATE

The Amiga's newest multimedia package has been updated and Gary Fenton is updating you! The version of MediaPoint I reviewed in the May issue was 125 which was shortly superseded by 126, and now we have 127! My, Activa have been busy, so let's see what's new in 127.
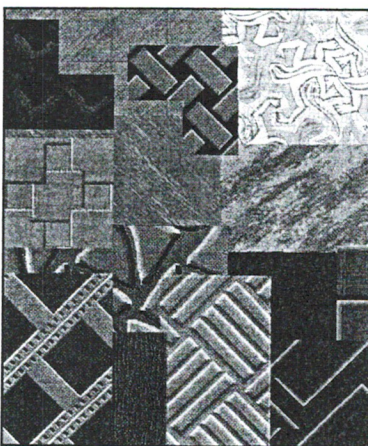
The first thing I tried out was the visual file selector which produces colour thumbnails of the pictures contained in the current directory. Dithering has now been employed which produces excellent results and it's a lot faster than it was before. You still can't travel back and forth between directories while on the thumbnail screen, and full screen images can't be previewed. (Nor can sound or music files, or wipe transitions which is a big mistake considering there are so many good looking effects to audition.)

The Good, The Bad...

The page editor is just the same (irritating compared with Scala), but some menus that were previously in windows have been given their own screen at the bottom of the page editor. This is a bad move because the bottom section of the screen is not visible when you're in overscan mode, and nor (still) are the pull down menus! Mad!

Good news! MP now has four levels of anti-aliasing. It actually adds anti-aliased pixels around the outside of the font which tends to make level 3 and 4 anti-aliased fonts look quite bold. One thing that threw me about the anti-aliasing was that MP anti-aliases to whatever colour the background happens to be. That's brilliant, and MediaPoint deserves a round of applause for that! Nice one!

Staying with text, you can now use underline in a separate colour from the text and text can be made see-through and outlined in any colour.

Now you can anti-alias in 4 levels and it looks go no matter what colour the background is!

A small selection from the 135 tiled backgrounds. Wild!

Boxes (really called windows) can have up to 21 new patterns applied to them and graphics can be optionally dithered using Floyed, Burkes, ordered or random techniques. The palette's broadcast limit features

This tasty demo script comes with the 127 upgrade. Yummm, burgers.

work in realtime so you can alter maximum, minimum, and average colour levels and see the results as you move the mouse! Good idea!

If you use a database which supports dbase files (most do) then you can load them straight into MP and select which records and fields to use. Very handy if you intend to use MP as an information system.

Bathroom Tiles

Instead of jamming up your hard disk with large hi-res background files, MP now employs "tiling" which takes a small IFF image and tiles the whole screen with it instantly producing a very impressive backdrop. 135 predrawn tiles come with MP127 including metal, grooved, paint, brick, graduated, wood, and heaps of others as shown in the example picture on this page.

New Xapps include support for MacroSystem's Toccata 16 bit sampler. This not only allows you to play back 16 bit audio but you can record as well! A Genlock Xapp can been included to toggle through the genlock modes on ECS and AGA Amigas. The SunRize Studio 16 Xapp is compatible with version 3 of the software, and an new Xapp for Selectra's VuPort will control up to 8 Panasonic AG-1960 VCRs!

By chance I found that the runtime player no longer shows an annoying copyright message before playing your script. This is terrific news if you're looking for a multimedia package which can happily play back scripts on machines without the need for dongles and copyright messages!

Conclusion

A few things still annoy me about MP, like having to save the page as a file every time you go back to the script editor, and some bugs which cause the computer to crash several times a day. I've got into the habit of saving my script every ten minutes.

The best news of all is that the upgrade is totally free to registered users which will certainly put a big smile on their faces. It's an important upgrade which gives MP some really neat features and, dare I say it, makes it a much more practical tool than before! Keep watching... *AUI*