



# BlitterWolf

## MONTHLY PAGES #19

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### JAHCSOFT INTERVIEW

1. *Hello and welcome from us at BlitterWolf. For our readers could you tell us your name, country and occupation please?*

A. My name is James Carroll, I live in Auckland, New Zealand. And I'm a .NET software developer. :)

2. *When was your first experience with the Amiga and what were your thoughts?*

A. It was at a friend of a friend's place in 1989. He had the best games. He was playing stuff like SilkWorm, and messing with some version of DPaint. I was 9 years old and everyone loved arcade and computer games at the time, so naturally I thought his A500 was pretty amazing. My first computer the next year was actually a Commodore 64. I would have liked an Amiga, but the C64 was all we could afford at the time. And it served me well for the next 2 or 3 years. :)

3. *What Amiga systems do you currently own?*

A. Just one, an AmigaOne X1000.

4. *How many Amiga systems have you owned in your lifetime?*

A. I've lost track of the numbers, it's a blur after 1999. I'd often really want another A600 or A1200 for some reason.. I'd buy it, and then it wouldn't get used much, or at all, so I'd sell it on again. The last A1200 I had I had upgraded it with everything I had ever wanted. It had a CompactFlash hard drive, PCMCIA ethernet card, etc. But I had to get rid of most of my belongings (including my useful "box of junk" that often had a cable or adapter or SOMETHING that I'd really need at 3am) so I'd have less things to take with me when I moved to Christchurch in 2009 (in the south island of New Zealand).

5. *Do you prefer using Classic or New Gen hardware?*

A. Next gen, but only because my interests changed around 1994. I used to love playing games on my A500, then a little bit on my A2000 and A1200's, but my interest in games started

to die off when I got my first modem. I started ringing BBS's, and that was more fun for me. Reading messages and chatting. And then eventually I started programming stuff along the way.. although I didn't really kick on with it until about 2003.

6. *What Amiga Operating System between 1.x and 4.x do/did you like to use most?*

A. I didn't take much notice of 1.3 because I didn't have a hard drive for a long time, and when I eventually got a 20mb Commodore A590, we upgraded the ROM's to 2.05 as well. I remember thinking the blue colour for active windows was pretty cool. It was something I had only seen on a friend's kick ass A500, which had an 80mb hard drive and various other bits and pieces. Look, it was impressive at the time, ok! Everyone loves an upgrade.. so I'd have to say the latest iteration of the OS is the one I like best. I never really used 3.5 or 3.9. I think I was using my first PC during those years.

7. *When did you start coding Amiga applications for the Amiga Platform?*

A. Age 13, 1993. A friend of mine convinced my dad to buy me Blitz Basic 2. So that's where I started. I didn't do anything notable, but of course creating stuff has always been fun. I started getting into C around 2003. I loved using BBS's in the 90's, but around 1996 or so most people were migrating to the internet. I eventually got online in 1997 and found there was quite a cool protocol called Internet Relay Chat (IRC), where you could type to people in real time. On the BBS's in Auckland, most of them only had one node, and a few had maybe 2 or 3. I enjoyed the multinode BBS's the most because you could page someone and chat. But on IRC, these channels could have any number of people. This was much better than a BBS as they would have maybe 1 person online, and he'd often just be logging in to take his turn in Land of the Red Dragon! In contrast, a popular Amiga hangout on Undernet called #amigacafe had around 20 or so regulars if I recall correctly. I used AmIRC and enjoyed it. Some years later, when the

"next-gen" stuff started to come out, I got an AmigaOne XE G3, and I began making my own IRC client. I think it might have been because I didn't want to pay the registration fee, but also I think it was because I had the desire I've had since age 13 to create software.

8. *What made you start coding for the Amiga platform?*

A. That's a tough one to answer. Just something I've always wanted to do, for whatever platforms I'm using!

9. *Did you have your most favourite played games on Amiga and what were/are they?*

A. Dune 2 and Syndicate were pretty good. I got into Capital Punishment too. Was a bit awkward playing that game with my mum, but she got over it we had some good battles, haha. Actually, Brutal Homcide 1 and 2 and Magic Roketz were other goodies. We always had problems getting the cardboard in the middle of the screen to stay taped to our monitor, and my brother would always see my radar because the front of my monitor was a bit curved. (I guess they all were back in the mid 90s?)

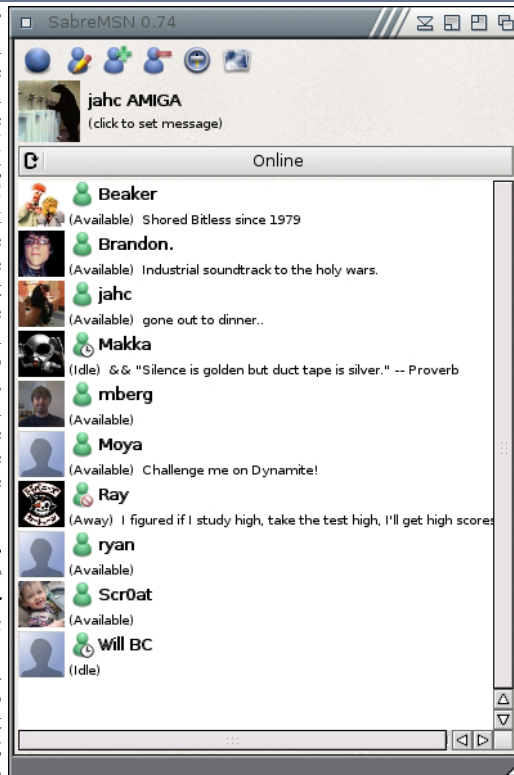
10. *Best Amiga system of all time for you?*

A. Sam Flex 733MHz was a favourite, because it provided a nice boost in speed, had more RAM for OWB and coding, and I used it for a long time.

11. *Best Amiga game of all time for you?*

A. Dune 2, followed by Syndicate.

12. *You share your name with a famous novelist. But you yourself would be mostly well known for RockBeat,*



SabreMSN 0.74 Screenshot

*WookieeChat and SabreMSN. So it looks like you like a chat, What inspired you to write some chat programs?*

A. Whoops I've already answered this. Refer to question 7. :) I know of that novelist. A close friend of mine since BBS days actually held up one of his books in a library about 10 years ago and asked me quite seriously "Did you write this?!" (he was pretty impressed when I said yes).

13. *What other projects are you planning on working on?*

A. I don't really have anything Amiga related planned unfortunately. I guess I just want to make a living now.

14. *You recently started living the coders dream with a job in development. So can you tell us the story of how that came about? And what were you doing before hand?*

A. Well, without going into details, my life changed for the better in 2009. I finally decided to do some formal study so I could get a bit of paper that said I knew how to program. I didn't want to do a degree for 3 years (although maybe I should have!), so I did a shortcut and did a quick diploma in software development over 10 months or



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so. I actually learnt a lot more than I realised I was going to. I got introduced to databases and SQL, and had my first taste of Java. It wasn't a challenging course, but I did learn quite a lot. Shortly after I finished, I did an unpaid internship with a software company for a month full time. I scored somewhat highly on their internal aptitude test, nearly doubling the previous highest score. At the end of the internship they hired me as a tester. A few months later, they gave me a shot at development, and I've made a good go of it.

15. Has your job been a blessing to or a distraction from your Amiga development?

A. Real life has been a big distraction from Amiga development. In between finding time to study, giving multiple women pleasure, and building up my career, I've barely had time to work on my Amiga projects. It was fun to learn programming on Amigas. I still remember Nicolas Mendoza explaining to me why I should check a pointer for NULL before writing to it haha. Itix used to give me a lot of MUI help on utilitybase.com and amiga.org, so it was great to meet him earlier this year. (I wish my head was in a better space at that time, I was still doing testing at the time and moaning to him about wanting to code for a living!)

16. I have to ask. What is with that picture of the triple (or quadruple) loos on your website? I can't decide; is that you, when you were asleep, hung over or depressed?

A. Anyone would be stuck in that situation surrounded by the toxic waste and fumes! :-P When I was living in Christchurch, me and my partner at the time were in the kids section of the museum, and we found a toilets display. If you lifted up each lid it had some sort of fun fact printed on a sheet of paper inside it. This is how we educate our young in New Zealand I guess. At the time I thought it would be a great place to take a lot of "funny" photos. Probably the best thing about these photos is that they provide evidence that I was once skinny.

As A last note A BIG thank you to you for doing the interview so

quickly. Its been a while, BUT I'd like the community to know we are back in action, we never left, just had some family issues to iron out and sort through.....

Phillip

### COMING OUT OF THE SHELL Pt3

#### Special Feature: Arguments on the command line

No, this months article isn't about verbally fighting with your Amiga in a shell window and telling it what it should be doing, but is about getting down to the nitty gritty and telling your Amiga straight how you want things to be done. You may have wondered as to what all the letters are that appeared in the parameters of a shell command. These are the command line arguments, and although the arguments or words may be specific to each individual command, the letters are only specific to AmigaDOS and have their own universal meaning. So here I have wrote a special feature on these arguments on the command line and what all those characters mean.

#### Setting ourselves up

All those options in the commands are part of what is called a template. The template is basically a map of what all the options are and how they are specified for any given command. On any standard command that follows AmigaDOS guidelines typing a question mark after typing the command name will reveal that command's template. With a following colon prompting you to type in some arguments. Here you can do so, or just press return to invoke it normally by itself.

#### Letters are the key

The template is formed out of what are called keywords, each with an associated keyword type given as the letter following the slash, indicating what type of argument or option it refers too. That's all very well and good, but what does it all mean? Well, getting down to business, here is a table explaining all the various types and options. And what all those 'slash letter' appearances are all about. Look out for words with the letters included in capital.

#### Keyword Meaning

Argument/A This one is Always required. Typing in

the keyword isn't needed.

Option/K This Keyword is used to specify an optional argument.

Option/S This keyword acts as Switch to this particular option, activating it.

Value/N This specifies a decimal number for a Numeric only argument.

Argument/M This allows Multiple arguments, grouped together, to be entered This is the Final argument, from the rest of the command line

String/F This argument is optional and typing in the keyword isn't needed.

= This tells of a short-cut or synonym to be used as a keyword.

Different keyword types may be mixed and matched together as well where appropriate. For instance, the /A/M type indicates multiple arguments may be given, but at least one must occur. A /K/N type indicates an option where the argument must be entered as a number.

#### Examples

To further explain how these work let's look at a popular AmigaDOS command, Dir.

Here's what happens in a shell window when we bring up the template in AmigsOS4.1:

```
7.Workbench:> Dir ?
DIR,OPT/K,ALL/S,DIRS/S,FILES/S,INTERACTIVE=INTER/S,SHOWPROGRAMS/S,MAXCOLUMNS/K/N:
```

Here we have the DIR keyword with no type, this argument is optional and we don't need to specify the DIR keyword when giving a directory. The OPT keyword sets some more options, you must type OPT following it with the particular option name you want. The following keywords are switches, typing them in your argument list activates them. The final keyword MAXCOLUMNS specifies a numerical amount which must appear if a value is given.

Now for something simple, the Join command:

```
FILE/M/A,AS=TO/K/A:
```

Here multiple files may be given first and at least one must appear. We can use AS or TO to specify a following argument, which must

also appear. Finally, let's look at the Copy command:

```
FROM/M,TO/A,ALL/S,Q=QUIET/S,BUF=BUFFER/K/N,CLONE/S,DATES/S,NOPRO=NOPROTECTION/S,COM=COMMENT/S,NOREQ=NOREQUESTERS/S,NOREP=NOREPLACE/S,INTER=INTERACTIVE/S,FORCE/S,ARC=ARCHIVE/S,NEWER/S,COPYLINKS/S,FOLLOWLINKS/S:
```

The FROM argument is optional here and multiple arguments may also be given if you do so. You must include an argument to satisfy the TO keyword. We can use BUF or BUFFER to specify a number. And the rest are switches.

Note here that in the above for instance, when specifying arguments for the FROM and TO keywords, the keywords don't need to be typed in as well. But for the BUFFER keyword, either BUF or BUFFER must be typed along with it's argument, in this case a number. When giving arguments for a /K keyword, you can separate the keyword and argument with either a space or an equals sign (=), as well. The command line parser doesn't mind which you use. Also, if you specify an argument such as in the FROM or TO example above where the keyword doesn't need to be typed as well, you can include it if you desire, perhaps for reasons of clarity which will also help the parser be accurate and not confuse things if that situation might arise.

#### Conclusion

Well I hoped you learned a bit more about the structure of AmigaDOS commands in this months Monthly Pages. If you have any particular commands you'd like to know more about or any other features of the shell in general then just send me an email and I'll be sure to include it in a future issue. For now happy arguing! :-)

Damien

#### TOP TEN OS4DEPOT DOWNLOADS

- |                      |           |
|----------------------|-----------|
| 1. napalm 0.1.3      | 6 Dec 11  |
| 2. devinfos 16.02    | 6 Dec 11  |
| 3. cdplayer_lib 52.5 | 30 Nov 11 |
| 4. letsplay          | 2 Dec 11  |
| 5. topapp 1.0        | 12 Dec 11 |
| 6. grunch 1.31       | 6 Dec 11  |
| 7. patchwarp3d beta6 | 6 Dec 11  |
| 8. gpatch 3.1        | 6 Dec 11  |
| 9. wbmakelink 2.6    | 11 Dec 11 |
| 10.classimple 1      | 11 Dec 11 |

Curtesy of OS4Depot