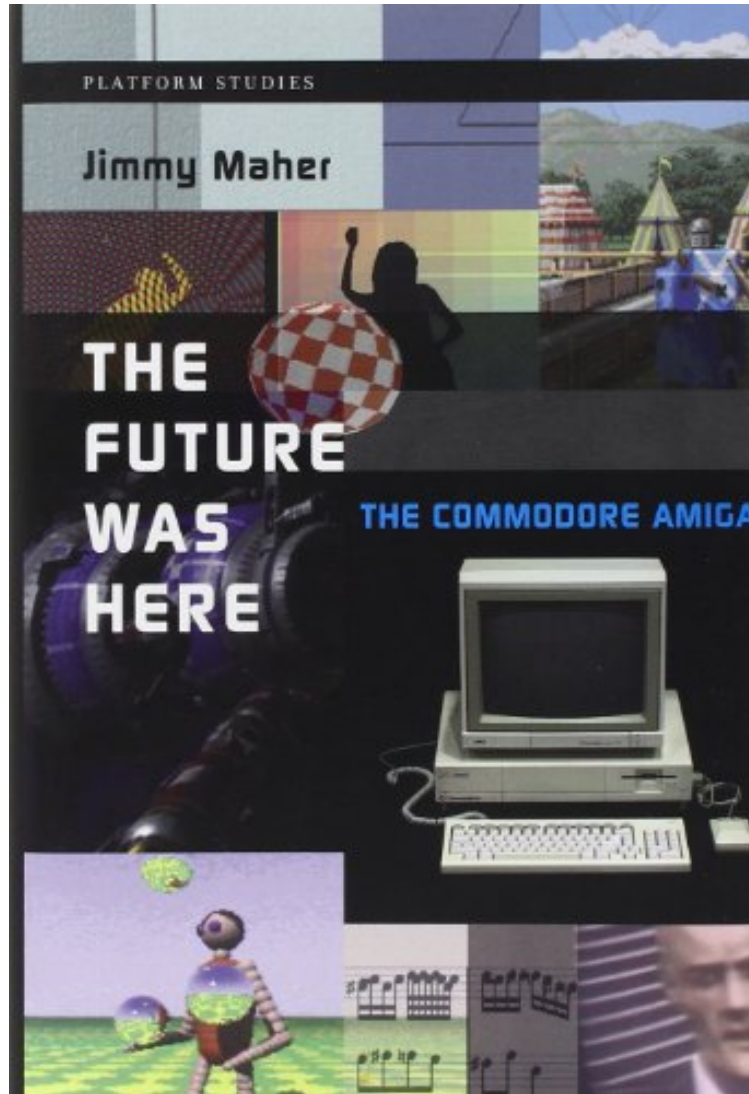


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## The Future Was Here: The Commodore Amiga (Platform Studies)

*Jimmy Maher*

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**Jimmy Maher : The Future Was Here: The Commodore Amiga (Platform Studies)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Future Was Here: The Commodore Amiga (Platform Studies):

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Amiga Forever!By Ali son of KhalilThe Amiga was the second computer that I ever knew after the programmable John Sands Sega SC3000H. I fell in love with my Amiga 500 as a child so it holds a special place in my heart. In all honesty no computer has ever left such a profound lasting effect on me.Jimmy Maher, thank you for explaining away the mystery. I have always known that the Amiga was a beautifully designed and built machine, but I never knew the technicalities of what made it so superior to the Macs, Ataris and

IBMs of its time. I have always wished that the Amiga never died, thanks for nothing Commodore. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Great nostalgic book By Andrew Pape This is a well-written book, especially nostalgic for anyone who had an Amiga. The book isn't perfect for any particular audience. I have a computer-game programming background, and have a Computer Science Degree, so I am more likely to understand the book's technical details than a layperson. If you don't know much about the basics of computers, then reading a book about an advanced computer like the Amiga will be difficult to read or appreciate. The author picked a good example for each chapter, e.g. how the Boing ball demo was made, and also the 3D Juggler. I was happy to learn about Boing, although for casual readers it might be difficult to follow, e.g. the concepts of colour-cycling. For the Juggler demo, I'd heard years ago that it used pre-generated graphics, as the Amiga was too slow to do the maths and graphics in real-time. The book mentions ray-tracing, but not the concepts behind it. Ray-tracing is complex because of the "recursion" technique used. The author doesn't even allude to this. A simple mention of the big problem would have made the reader better appreciate the demo. In some chapters, I lost interest because I didn't know about the exact technology discussed. This made me more like a layperson, and most probably other readers will struggle also. Once the author got to the topic of game programming, about 1/2 way through the book, I couldn't put it down. This is because I had always dreamed about making games, and have made a couple myself, but long after the days of the Amiga. I was unfortunate enough not to have had enough technical knowledge to make an Amiga game. Now that the author has explaining technical details, I wish I was back in those old days but armed with my newfound knowledge. Unfortunately, the author only alludes to both Assembly Language and C. Actually, there is no C code demo, and the small Assembler demo leaves a lot to be desired. When describing a great game, it is clear that the author is a programmer, and not just an historian. For example, he has written his own C version of a game originally written in Assembly Language. For those who don't know anything about these languages, or computer languages in general, the read will most likely be boring and intimidating. From my point of view, the book would have been better if it were more technical, and for those who aren't computer literate, the book will be too complex as-is. The author had to compromise. I'd take half a star off the book's rating for being too technical for a layperson, and another 1/2 star for it not being technical enough for me. Otherwise, it's a great book. It could have been improved by having an appendix for those who don't know about "bits and bytes", and another for further explanations of the technical tricks used by game programmers. The author explains the history of Commodore and the Amiga's demise, and this was news to me. I knew the Amiga had vanished, but never knew why. This history lesson is readable by anyone, both computer scientists and historians. This a a good book, well-written and with apt examples. 3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. This book needed to be written. By Jeremy Moskowitz If I had unlimited time and resources in my life, I would have written this book. It is exquisitely detailed, but not overly so. There are working examples from the author if you care to take a deeper dive. The facts are accurate, and the "positioning" and analysis is thought out and well reasoned. In short, there's a lot to like about this book if you were an Amiga enthusiast. But the more important reason that this book should have been written (and now is) is for when future historians want to take a reasoned approach to understanding why things unfolded the way they were. IN 50 years, this book will hold up with the technical accuracy, attention to detail, cited references, and "just enough" detail to tell the story in an accurate and easy to read way. Thanks Jimmy for the book, and more importantly, future historians of the technology will thank you too.

Exploring the often-overlooked history and technological innovations of the world's first true multimedia computer. 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.

*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 s) About the Author Jimmy Maher is an independent scholar and writer living in Norway.