Contents | < Browse | Browse >
_____

```
=========================================================================
      REVIEW: THE A2410 (U.  Lowell) TIGA GRAPHICS CARD AND A2410 EGS
                          By:  Jason Compton
=========================================================================
```

The Amiga situation could be something of a biblical epic...we've escaped
slavery in search of the promised land. Of course, now we have to be sure
van Tienen and his Escom associates aren't just new pharoahs in disguise,
but...

Another way to put it is that we Amigans have become a bit of a scavenger
race...scrounging for parts, software, and hardware wherever they become
available. The A2410 card is a perfect example.

Initially built by Commodore as a graphics board for its 3000UX machines,
the card is based on a University of Lowell design for a TI-based graphics
processor chip at 50mhz. It can operate from a 24-bit palette but only
256 on-screen colors, and is Zorro II.

At the time of its release, its value was somewhere around $1000. Up
until they ran out (just a week or so ago) Software Hut was selling them
as Liquidation-Ware(tm) for a mere $140, and rumor has it they can be had
for even less in Germany.

The TIGA system was never very well developed for the Amiga (TIGA being,
essentially, that which makes the card go)-the environment still has a
message from a DevCon on it. Direct Workbench emulation for the card has
been attempted, but nothing much has come of it. Instead, a stable (well,
fairly stable) and usable (well, fairly usable) EGS environment has been
created.

The EGS environment allows the card to run EGS-direct applications as well
as a not-bad Intution emulation on the 256-color environment of the card.
It is certainly not perfect, especially on the Intuition side, but the EGS
applications have stabilized considerably.

The card offers resolutions up to 1024x1024 interlaced (there are only 5
available modes, and you must choose two in HARDWARE by having the proper
oscillators installed. The shipped modes are 800x600NI and 1024x768NI),
and EGS will support them all. I personally have only been able to test
600x800NI as it is all my monitor will support, and I haven't been able to
locate the proper oscillator for 1024x768I. Of course, for the money
you're paying, you don't get video passthrough, so either get a switchbox
or deal with the wear and tear of ripping the cable back and forth.

The EGS environment itself may seem a bit foreign at first to Amiga
users-it is in effect a separate entity if you run EGS-direct
applications, and you have to get used to the new display and rules. It's
something that has to be experienced to be understood. However, you will
only use it in conjunction with EGS-direct applications, and they are not
in massive abundance (usually picture viewers, although ImageFX 1.5 had an
EGS-direct version). I find it most useful for the viewers and ImageFX
2.0 rendering (you can only render out to the card.)

For "normal" use, you can tell ScreenMode Prefs to use your A2410 mode for
Workbench. This works fairly well, but you won't be stunned by the speed.
I'd venture to say that a 4000/040 at 256 colors can give it a run for its
money. Nevertheless, it is there, and it DOES work. Unfortunately, I
have yet to find a way to display more than one Intuition screen on the
card-meaning that you have to run everything on the Workbench if you want
to use the card. This isn't TERRIBLE, but one of the nice things about
the Amiga is screen flipping...at any rate, software is not ENTIRELY
stable here. Photogenics does not like the emulation, and, surprisingly
enough, amigaguide.library/.datatype doesn't seem to, either. Mosaic also
seems a bit less stable. However, it IS a 256 color Workbench, for better

        or worse.

        So, why pick up such a card? Well, CyberGraphics may be developed for it
        soon (by the same person who wrote A2410 EGS), which would seem to
        promise better WB compatibility. It also is an escape, albeit a minor
        one, for ECS users. (EGS has a nasty habit of dithering things when it
        shouldn't, so in some cases, pictures WILL look better on ECS,
        particularly if they are <256 colors.) Up until recently, when Software
        Hut ran out of its stock from the Commodore US auction, it and the Retina
        were the only two readily available video cards in North America. (The
        Picasso II is available infrequently, and now SoftWood has signed on to do
        distribution of the CyberVision here...) It does work with the Emplant,
        although only in 1024x768. It's also not a bad deal.

        Nope, it's not for everyone, and if you've got more money to blow, by all
        means do. But for an ECS user, considering that the card shouldn't run
        you more than $100 used, it may be a nice escape into high resolutions
        (you really can cram a lot onto an 800x600 Workbench) and true 256 color
        display. I'm also told that because the TI chip is a true graphics
        processor, software could, if it so chose, use it as a coprocessor...but I
        don't know of anything that does.

        Your choice. Me, I don't have too many regrets, other than finding out
        two weeks after getting it that Softwood would have the Cybervision...

        EGS and A2410 EGS are available on orion.etsu.edu for FTP.

        EGS is a product of Viona Development.

        A2410 EGS is a product of Juergen Schober (point@sbox.tu-graz.ac.at)