

# Open Video Toaster

## The World's first Open-Source Video Editing System

The Video Toaster is still one of the most influential, and coolest named, Amiga products, but is little known in the UK. Bill Panagouleas briefs us on its history and his efforts to resume development.

### October 1990, Flashback

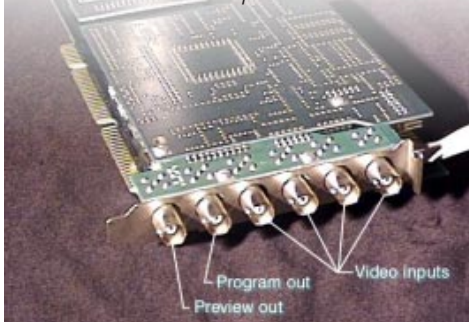
NewTek shocks the world of television production by releasing Video Toaster 1.0 for the Amiga. The Video Toaster evolved from a simple premise: provide all the tools necessary to create broadcast-quality television in a single, accessible device. Not surprisingly, the established broadcast video industry greeted the Video Toaster with skepticism, at best. Despite these marketing challenges, the Video Toaster caught on with an enormous range of people who shared a desire to "make TV". It literally replaced hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of equipment for \$5,000, and put sophisticated tools into the hands of "average" people – from high school students to professional event videographers.

So began the paradigm shift that launched an entire industry and was first called the "Desktop Video Revolution". The Video Toaster received coverage in all major magazines including Popular Science, Rolling Stone and Playboy. I'm sure other software developers on Macintosh and the PC noticed

and got very jealous. Many products were announced and promoted but the truth is that there is a whole graveyard of video effects cards from that era on the Mac and PC that tried to fight against the Amiga Video Toaster and died a horrible death. Video Blender, Video Spigot, Video Blaster, Etc. These other video solutions failed because they did not offer all the power and feature-set of the Video Toaster and were just me-too rush jobs. Most of them did not use the Amiga which was perfect for video at the time, so that was their fatal flaw.

Customers just bought the Video Toaster since it worked and gave them a CG (Character Generator), Paint package, 3D animation program (Lightwave 3D), Real-time Effects, Genlocking, and Chroma Keying all in one system. For customers that did not like the "A" word (Amiga) NewTek re-branded Amiga 2000 machines with the Video Toaster logo and sold them (They also did this with the Amiga 4000).

Things went very well for NewTek and I have heard they sold around 100,000 Video Toaster cards, though I don't



The video inputs and outputs on the backplane of a Video Toaster 4000.

know the real figures for sure. TV Stations, Cable Networks and Amiga videographers bought the Video Toaster in droves and many new companies were created, anyone that could afford to buy a new car could be in the video production business. Video Toaster software upgrades continued every year and the Toaster card itself received a slight upgrade in 1993 to take advantage of the new AGA Amiga 4000 computer.

### 1994 Tapeless Editing added to the Video Toaster completing it as a all in one Video Editing system

NewTek introduced its next tradition-breaking product, the Amiga Video Toaster Flyer, in April 1994. The Flyer was configured as an add-on board for the Video Toaster in an Amiga computer. It provided quality nonlinear editing capabilities and was affordable. NewTek weathered the falling fortunes of the Amiga computer and its manufacturer, Commodore Business Machines, which went out of business. The company had chosen the Amiga platform because, unlike any other personal computer, the Amiga's video display most closely matched that of a television.



The Flyer was a fantastic upgrade to the Video Toaster but the death of Commodore made many customers question its value. Many of the original buyers never got to experience the Flyer and that is sad because it completes the Video Toaster and makes it a well rounded tapeless editing system. Software upgrades continued and the Video Toaster got to version 4.3 in 1997, but the death of Commodore slowly hurt

Download the Video Toaster application source code from <http://discreetfx.com/openvideotoaster.html>

NewTek's sales of the Video Toaster 4000 and the Flyer. To compound the problem it became illegal for QuikPak to manufacture the Amiga 4000T around 1997, someone please explain that one to me!!! I'm sure NewTek loved the Amiga but it is quite understandable to save themselves they had to make Lightwave 3D and the Video Toaster for other operating systems. They still fix Video Toaster cards and Flyer cards to this day for free though, they will even give you Tech Support and help with DigiView; god bless them.

### 2001: NewTek ships Video Toaster 2, the next-generation PCI card

Video Toaster [2] includes all the equipment needed to create and distribute television in a live, real-time environment that's just fun to use. So many professional video tools are integrated into this powerhouse – and the industry was once again stunned by the price – way under \$5,000! All the software that comes with Video Toaster[2] requires Windows 2000/XP though. This is a very nice solution for Widows users and I am shocked that more have not bought it. Today's video software landscape has changed dramatically, what once was a niche market with the cost of ownership starting at \$5000, is now a more mainstream market with products available for \$50 or even free (MS Movie Maker 2, free only if you own Windows XP). The sad fact about this new affordable reality is that features and power have been sacrificed in place of price. And customers do not know this, they think when they load their free copy of Adobe Premiere the horrible and unintuitive interface is what video editing is all about.

Many powerful 3rd party products came out for the Flyer like RenderFX and Audio Black Box from ProWave (Programmed by Bill Evans) and some very nice tools from Aussie (OzWare) that made editing easier and faster for Flyer owners.

### 1998: Amazing Computing Article comes out about releasing the Video Toaster Flyer Source-Code

The Bandito (Amazing Computing's rumor columnist) writes an Article that says the Video Toaster Flyer software is no longer being updated and other companies are trying to

take away Newtek's market. His solution? Release the source code to the product for talented Amiga coders to see and update. Open source software was starting to take off in the mainstream and Netscape had just released the source to Netscape Navigator. I remember that article well since I wrote it, I was Amazing Computing's last "Bandito" before they unfortunately ceased publication.

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Mac OS X's Final Cut Pro owners have it a little better but



still have no idea what a Switcher is or the workflow benefit of Real-time Effects. Also I have seen nothing that is as easy to learn as the Video Toaster Flyer. You can learn to use most of it in about twenty minutes. Compare that to the frustration and long learning curves you have if you bought a DV Video Camera and want to edit on Windows or Mac.

### Feb 2004 Open Video Toaster goes live

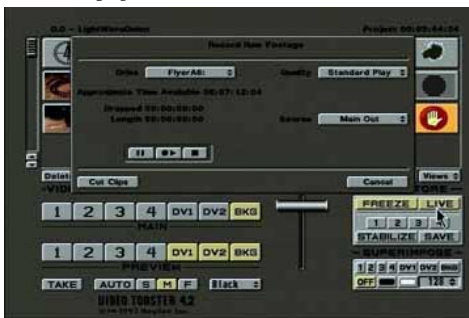
This is why I started Open Video Toaster. I don't want the Amiga Video Toaster Flyer to be forgotten, many still use it today for all of their editing needs. Even though I have the latest PC Video Toaster, VT[3], I still use and love my Amiga 4000T Video Toaster Flyer system. Using the VT[3] and Flyer together make for one super powerful editing system.

Tim Jenison was kind enough to listen to the Amiga community and allow Paul Lara to give the source-code out, developers Bill Evans and Aaron "Aarexx" Ruscetta did a nice job cleaning up the code so it is ready for Amiga programmer consumption. They used much of their own personal time to organize this gift to the community, so deserve a special thank you. Everyone should also send NewTek a special thanks for allowing Amiga owners to finally have one of the more

interesting codebases on the Amiga platform.

It is my hope that now that the code is available, talented Amiga programmers will make it work with the new PCI Video Toaster (VT[3]). The VT[3] card could be an extra device for a Video Toaster 4000 & Flyer inside of your Mediator PCI based Amiga 4000 or 4000T computer system running Amiga OS 4.0 or maybe parts of the code could even be used on an AmigaOne with the PCI Toaster installed.

Why would anyone do this? The Amiga is the ultimate Hot Rod of computers, users and developers have been turbo charging them for years so why not? Last month's launch of Open Video Toaster was a great success. Visitors to the site downloaded over 57 Gigabytes of source code! When you consider that the code to the Amiga Video Toaster Flyer is only about 30MB that is a lot of unique downloads. As we suspected there has been a very high demand for this code ever since its release. Just like it took time for the Netscape source-code to be updated; look how powerful and feature rich Mozilla is today! I have high hopes for the Video Toaster Flyer source-code, may it continue to live on and on just as the Amiga OS has. Who knows what the future might hold.



Like much software of its time, the Video Toaster's suite of applications used a custom interface.