

IVS Trumpcard500

No more "Insert Workbench in any drive" messages, exalts John Kennedy and advises you to get into the 'scoozie' world . . .

If there is one peripheral which will transform your Amiga like no other, it's a hard disk. I know you are probably sick of hearing this, but if you have never used one before, the incredible difference it will make to your system is hard to explain. Let me put it like this:

Imagine that every day for the past ten years you have had to walk five miles to work. Think about it: Every day, five miles there and five miles back. And twice at lunchtime too.

steal to get it back. Once you have experienced the power and speed of a hard disk, life is never the same again.

Ok, so there are drawbacks to buying a hard disk. And the drawback to end all drawbacks is "Like a hard drive costs real money, man." But, you will find it worth every penny.

The Real World

There are quite a few hard drives avail-

able for the A500, but only about three which would appeal to the mass market - if there is such a thing as a mass market for hard drives - by being almost affordable.

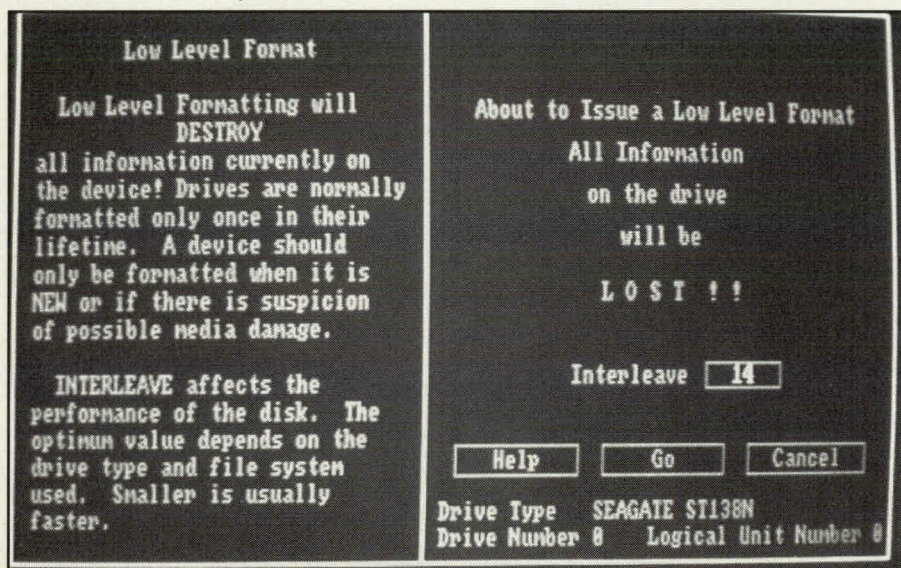
These drives are the official Commodore A590, the GVP Series 2 and the IVS Trumpcard 500. The Trumpcard fills a nice gap: It has more storage than either and is priced somewhere in the middle.

Jargon Time

If you are into hard drives and/or computer jargon you'll have come across the acronym SCSI. It stands for Small Computer Systems Interface and is usually pronounced 'scuzzy' or ('scoozie' if you're me).

SCSI is an accepted standard which - unlike many other standards - actually works. If you connect any SCSI device to an Amiga with a SCSI interface all you need is the right software and you're home and dry.

I must admit that I never actually believed this, until I connected a bog-standard Apple Macintosh hard drive to an Amiga 2000 with a SCSI interface fitted. To my utter astonishment, the drive worked perfectly. This opens the door to all sorts of amazing hardware. Such as 600Mb removable optical drives, scan-



Imagine also that suddenly, overnight even, your office suddenly shifts to the house next door. Now, to get to work you just open your front door, jump over the fence and your there. Wouldn't that be nice?

Now you're starting to get the idea. Imagine an Amiga that never, ever asked you to swap disks. No more "Insert Workbench in any drive" messages. Think of your Amiga only taking fifteen seconds to load its Workbench. Wouldn't it be nice?

When you plug a hard disk into your Amiga, you have a new computer. It's not just better, it's different.

Take my advice: If anyone ever offers to lend you a hard disk for a week, don't take it. Once you have used your Amiga with a hard disk, you'll never be able to go back to floppies again. You'll beg, borrow or

Trump1 (above) is the utility software which comes with the hard drive.

"If anyone ever offers to lend you a hard disk for a week, don't take it. Once you have used your Amiga with a hard disk, you'll never be able to go back to floppies again"



ners, plotters and, of course, the in-vogue CD-ROM drives.

The IVS Trumpcard is a SCSI controlled drive, and so somewhere inside the drive casing is a full set of SCSI control and data signals, just waiting for you to connect your next purchase. It would have been nice if they had been brought out to the blanking panel at the rear, but let's be honest here: most users will be lucky to be

able to afford a hard drive in the first place, never mind any extras. Still, it's nice to know that should the need arise you haven't backed into a corner when it comes to expansion.

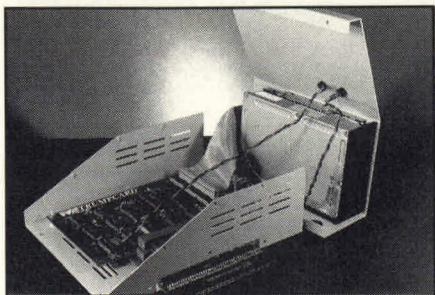
Another nice point is the edge connector available inside the casing. It's here that the optional 2 and 4Mb ram expansion cards fit, a space that funds permitting I would like to have occupied before too long. Furthermore, if you outgrow the ST-125N-0 hard drive mechanism fitted, you could plug in a bigger drive. Just like that. Aren't standards wonderful?

In Use

Connecting the Trumpcard to an Amiga 500 couldn't be simpler. You just pop out the little plastic cover on the left of the casing (yes, that's what it's for) and plug in the drive. Then you switch on your computer and it boots up (assuming you have Kickstart 1.3, which all Amiga's bought in the past few years will). It's so simple I'd almost let my mother have a go. It connects snugly to a Checkmate digital A1500 expansion box too, only needing something to support it a little (such as an old mousemat).

There is no external power supply, although provision has been made for one if you think you need it. Normally I'm paranoid about Commodore power supplies, but I've used the Amiga, the hard drive, two floppies and a video digitiser all at once with no problems. If I had more than 1Mb of ram expansion though, I'd definitely hook up a new power supply. No point asking for trouble, and hooking up a separate one for the drive is simply a matter of changing the position of some internal jumpers.

The drive housing is made from a pressed steel sheet and is painted in the now obligatory shade of beige: White with a hint of Commodore. It's not entirely pleasing to the eye, but has a certain air of functionality about it. Reminds me of a Volkswagen for some reason.



In use, it's a doddle. You know it's there because you can hear it whirring away. You soon ignore the noise, and are only reminded of its presence once every couple of minutes when the drive is "tickled". It makes a little ticking noise as the read/write head is given a gentle reminder not to doze off.

My Trumpcard came pre-formatted which meant that all I had to do was copy

all my programs onto it. I duplicated the EMPTY drawer a dozen times, renaming them with exciting titles such as "WORDPROCESSOR", "ART", "PROGRAMMING", "INFOCOM" and then dragged all the icons across from floppy disks. It's a rare occurrence when a floppy is ever inserted, other than to stop the drives from clicking or for a backup.

"Connecting the Trumpcard to an Amiga 500 couldn't be simpler. You just pop out the little plastic cover on the left of the casing and plug in the drive"

Backing up is something that you'll soon get to know all about when you have a hard drive. After using one for even a short time, you'll find that you have collected a great deal of vital information. But more than that: your hard disk becomes your 'personal' computer. Everyone has a definite way of setting things set up: the

they aren't indestructible.

I've been using the Trumpcard for several months now without any problems at all, but I know that some day I may face a disaster.

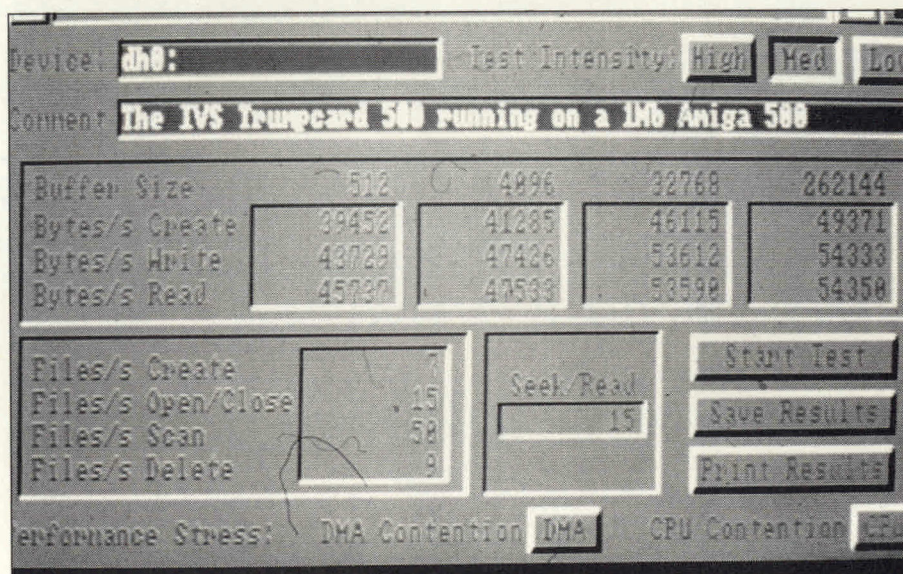
Perhaps my younger brother will accidentally delete my prized collection of anatomical bitmaps. Perhaps one of my more experimental C programs will amok. I don't know what will happen, but I know I'm ready for it.

In fact, with a hard drive storing so much data, a utility program such as SID is almost a necessity. SID will allow you to move around, copying and deleting files much faster than from either the CLI or the Workbench. It should be one of the first programs you install.

A floppy disk containing a suite of utility programs is supplied,

but the chances are you'll never need them. If your drive needs to be formatted, a rather cunning program on the floppy will do it all for you. You don't need to wear an anorak to be able to use this hard drive.

Trump2 (below) is the results of DiskPerf3, currently the best disk tester.



choice of workbench colours; your amusingly shaped pointer; the way in which drawers are organised; your favourite utility programs; in other words the sort of thing which makes a workbench your own. If all that goes, you have a dreadful feeling of having to start all over again from scratch.

That's why backups are so vital.

There are several commercial programs around designed specifically to make backups, and if you are lucky, your Trumpcard will come with one. You just run the program, and it will save any changes made to your files since the last time you used it. In this way, your backup can take only a minute or two to make each week. Time well spent, because sometime, somewhere you'll need it.

Modern hard drives are reliable, but

The Final Word

Do you really need a hard drive? If you use your Amiga for anything other than a games console, then yes - you really need one. It's all but essential if you program, draw, animate, raytrace, word process, DTV or DTP. I've used the Trumpcard for all these tasks, and it has never let me down.

Do you need this hard drive? Again, you probably do. It's just about the right size for 'domestic' use and it has good expansion capabilities. Consider it seriously when you decide it's time for your Amiga to become a real computer.

J.K.

Price: From £399.99
Contact: Third Coast Technologies
Telephone: (0257) 472444