

Amiga Racer

... Step on it



Developer: Michael St. Neitzel – Release date: in development (as of November 2015) – Price: free, donationware

Let's briefly recall the year of 1990 when Lotus Esprit Turbo Challenge was released for the Amiga. Very soon afterwards it became the top car racing game of that year. Especially popular was the game's split screen mode and the multi-player option via a null modem cable so you could play together with up to four players. Michael St. Neitzel was among those fans of Lotus back then and wanted to bring back that feeling on today's Amiga NG hardware.

Any user could follow its development progress via a Facebook group. It's quite amazing to see how fast the game has improved during its development. New updates have been continuously added bringing either new cars, musical scores or other improvements. Especially the live-update, which requires an online connection, but turns out to be especially comfortable. After

are possible such as night, rain, snow, wind, coast, city and highway. The matching landscapes are automatically generated for the desired scenario. So if you want to go with Winter, you have to cope with some snow or slippery roads. If you choose coast, you can enjoy the nice weather and the lovely panorama with palm trees.

The level of difficulty depends on the number of computer cars. That means, the more cars you have on your route, the more difficult it will be for you. You can also integrate some additional hurdles. You can put stones, snow or oil on the road. You can then save the routes



The menu ...



Sound selection on the radio



Start your engines

So, the idea for Amiga Racer was born. It's supposed to be a game that's just like Lotus was back then - lots of fun. But this time in-tune with modern technology and boasting extra functions without losing that retro feeling. At the 30 years Amiga event in October 2015 in Neuss, Germany, the many visitors got a chance to take a look at an early version of Amiga Racer. Michael St. Neitzel was present there as an exhibitor displaying also a 30 Years Event Edition of "Amiga Racer". In the meantime he has continued working on Amiga Racer and the first official version should be out by the time you read this review.



Florida route



Winter route

the game starts, the current data is loaded via live-update and is automatically installed.

Amiga Racer has been deliberately created as close to the Lotus style as possible, and it seems like that has been achieved. In the clearly arranged menu you can choose your desired settings. You can select various routes and cars, but if you are not keen on using the tracks provided in the game, you can also generate your own tracks. Using ARCS, the Amiga Racer Construction Set, and selecting various parameters you can create a new track. The player can set various values, such as the track length or the number and the sharpness of the bends. You can also influence the route elevation so you don't get the impression of driving through a plain. Various scenarios

created with ARCS on your local computer and try them out to see if you like them. If you want you can also provide the routes online that you've generated yourself. There will be a cloud function so you can upload your tracks, and let other players use and store them on their computers. This function offers you the advantage of having countless routes and always playing Amiga Racer with a different scenario.

If you are not much of a lone player, you also have the opportunity of hitting the road with other racers. Amiga Racer offers online team-play as well, as well as playing with up to four players in a team, with the maximum of four teams competing against each other simultaneously, while you all try to reach the



Michael St. Neitzel

best high-score. So there's room for up to sixteen players in the multi-player mode. That sounds like lots of action and competition on the streets, but above all, it sounds like lots of fun.

The musical score in Amiga Racer is also very nice. The developer has placed great value on selecting music that matches the game and that has the desired feel of retro sounds. The music for the game has been done in a sound-studio. In the game the included routes will have default music. However, before you start playing you can select other musical tunes for your car radio. You can also set the volume of your engine noises.

If you want to take some screenshots from the game, you just have to press "S". This function has been implemented because lots of people have asked for it. Your screenshots are stored in the main directory of Amiga Racer files with titles like Screenshot-xy.bmp. That means, you can create up to 99 screenshots per game. If you start the game again and start making new screenshots, the older screenshot files will then be overwritten.

Despite the great amount of effort Michael St. Neitzel has invested in this game, he'll offer it for free. But if you want to reward his work, let's not mention the running server costs for the online functions, you can of course make a donation. You have the chance to support the programmer's work on the Amiga Racer homepage. You'll find the link for it in the info box. Furthermore, every donor gets a keyfile and new features, for example, new cars, will be activated earlier for them than for the public.

We took a closer look at version 1.9c of Amiga Racer and the game is lots of fun in this version already. You can control the game either with your keyboard, a classic joystick or a gamepad. Amiga Racer starts initially in a

Workbench window, but you can switch to fullscreen mode by pressing F in the menu. If you are already playing the game you can return to the menu by pressing ESC or leave the game by pressing ESC for the second time. First, you choose a car and a route/track, and once you've done with selecting a car radio tune, just like it does in Lotus, it starts. You can change the music again if you want, and you're good to begin. You start at a checkpoint and you try to get in front as soon as possible but cars passing you make it more difficult for you. Optically, Amiga Racer makes a great impression. While you're driving, the viewing angle of the background changes depending on the length of the bend. Especially if you aren't driving through flat routes, but a bendy section where the altitude changes looks very good. If you're driving over a hill, you should be careful because a bend or another car may suddenly show up in front of you. That means, you have to be observant and react quickly. The one-player mode is also lots of fun.

When this article was being written I could select two routes in Amiga Racer but there should be more available by the time this issue is out. Fittingly in the cold season there's a Winter route with snowfall that's really nice to watch. As already mentioned, by the time you read this article, there will be many more features integrated in the game, and some fine tuning. The cars should be able to break-up in certain situations, like for instance over an oil surface. The engine sound should also change relative to your car speed. The collision query should have been optimised by then. We're looking forward to the end result and the first official version of Amiga Racer.

Conclusion

Amiga Racer's framework is finished and it just requires the finishing touches. If you're part of

Amiga Racer

Program type: race game
 Price: free, donations are welcome
 Programmer: Michael St. Neitzel
 eMail: amigaracer@amigatec.com
 Download/Support: <http://amigatec.com>

System Requirements

- AmigaOS 4.1 on X1000m SAM 440/460, Pegasos II or AmigaOne XE/G4
- MorphOS 3.4
- Linux Intel-based x86 or x64
- at least 1 GB RAM recommended

Test System

AmigaOne XE/G4-800Mhz, 2048 MB, Radeon 9250, SBLive, AmigaOS 4.1 FE

Features

- Keyboard, classic joystick or gamepad commands
- selection of various car types e.g. sports car, limousine
- selection of various routes/tracks, e.g. highway, night route, winter route
- selection of various individually composed soundtracks
- playable in fullscreen or on the Workbench
- route/track generator with the option of saving generated routes (locally or online)
- Screenshot function using a keystroke during the game
- Online live-update
- Multi-player mode (still in development)

Update

Shortly after the editorial deadline there was another live update for AmigaRacer to version 2.1. Here's a list of the changes:

- revised and expanded menu
 - so-called checkpoints are now included in the routes
 - new cars have been added
 - there's a tachometer now in the bottom screen area
- You will find an overview of the current updates, new cars and new features on AmigaTec's homepage.

the game's Facebook group, you can follow the development stages of Amiga Racer. Some users' notes have already been considered during its development. By the way, the game is programmed completely under AmigaOS4.1 FE with Codebench and AmigaSDK. It's truly amazing how Michael St. Neitzel is pushing on the development and delivering results. I would like to point out again that version 1.9c was the last version available at the time this article was written, but in the meantime it most likely will have been further updated. However, this early version shows already that Amiga Racer is a really well-done, offering long-term fun regardless if you're in one-player or multi-player mode. I can't remember the last time we've had a game for free of such quality. I might even dare a claim right now that Amiga Racer will be a runaway success (excuse the pun). In this context then, step on it and don't forget to support Michael for his work and efforts, whether that's by giving him feedback or making a small donation for his game. It's definitely worth it.

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