

JACKSOFT LABS

I'M REALLY TIRED OF SONY POLICY

How about if you discover that your PC is EFI compliant but without... EFI?

All started about one or two years ago, when me and my partner in science Dom (Snake) discovered the beautiful world of Hackintoshes.

We started to try to make OS X boot on our machines; me on my Sony VAIO and him on his desktop (that have the same motherboard as mine), with Chameleon as bootloader. To make OS X works good you need very much time to spend on it, to try various bootloader configurations and drivers (called Kernel Extensions or simply "kexts"). After some MONTHS we had our Hackintosh working at 99%: it's a great goal!

In this months we switched to Clover Bootloader (firstly me, because with Chameleon I had some difficulties to make the most of the hardware working good, after him for some reasons like mines), and the results was very impressive. Clover is a very great bootloader, that works both in EFI (preferred) and in Legacy mode.

Since our machines are legacy we have to use Clover in legacy mode.

What are the differences?

Dom discovered, by testing on a newer machine with UEFI BIOS, that Clover in EFI mode is REALLY faster and OS X doesn't need so much drivers/kexts like the Legacy one.

And here is were I got mad. By entering in my VAIO BIOS Setup Menu I discovered the label "Aptio Setup Utility", and with AIDA64 (A software for Windows that show you ALL the information about your hardware) I discovered that is an AMI EFI BIOS.

So immediately I thought "EFI BIOS without EFI boot?" and made a really vaster search on the internet.

Meanwhile I searched for the BIOS of my VAIO, because Sony NEVER released it and NEVER have released an update! (Instead of other brand that full support users with BIOS updates).

Then I've asked directly to Sony support and of course they replied... "We are sorry, but your model is too old!"

A VPCEB4C5E bought in 2011 IS TOO OLD!?

900€ MACHINE IS TOO OLD AFTER TWO YEARS!?

Thanks to various communities we discovered very much about how a BIOS is made and how it works: O-Rom modules (discovered by flashing modified BIOS for our desktop motherboard), DSDT (discovered by working on Hackintoshes), MSR Registers, etc.

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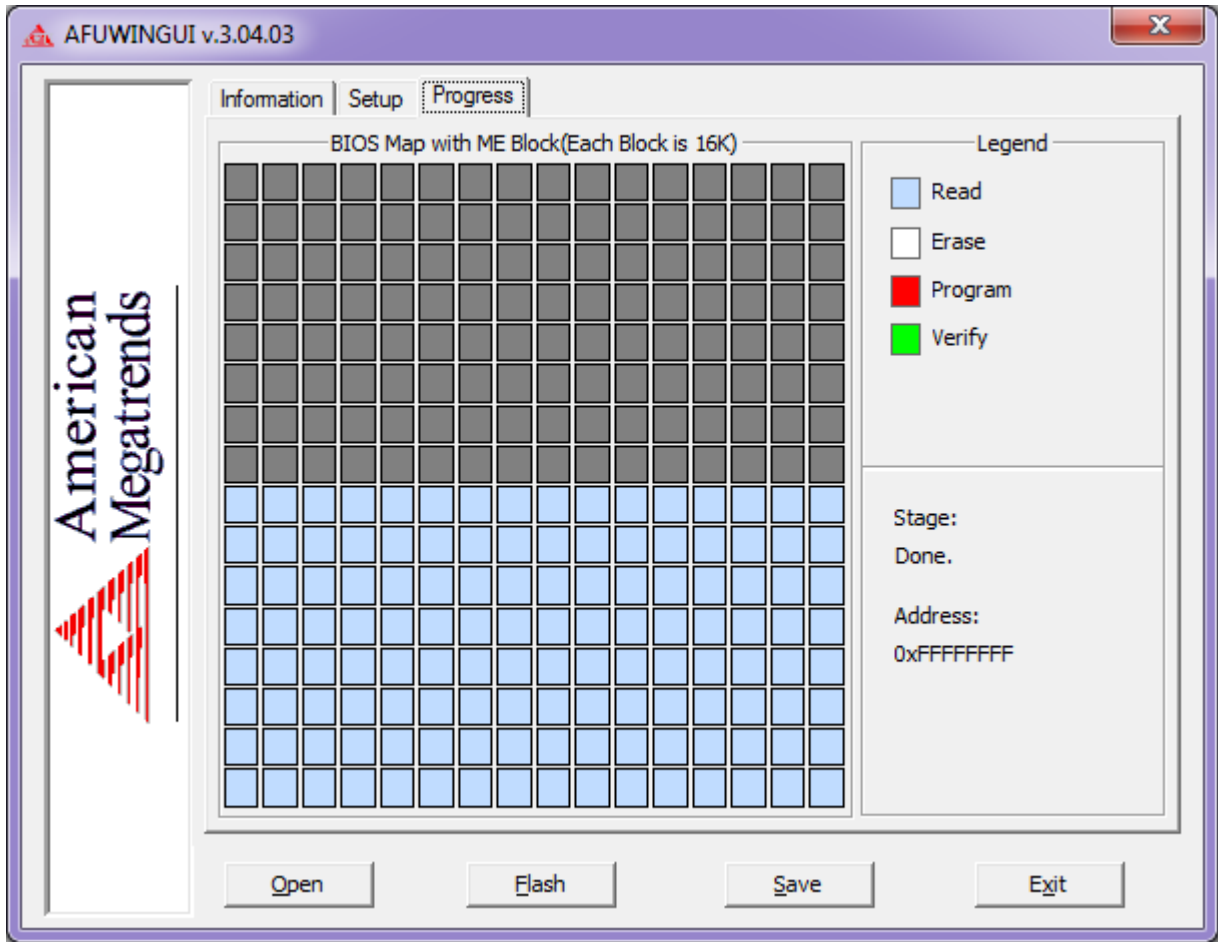
The good thing to have an updated BIOS is that firstly many possibles bugs could be fixed, secondly (and not less important) is the upgrades of O-ROMs.

O-ROMs are little modules provided by hardware producers (Intel, AMD, Marvell, etc) that are substantially the firmwares of each microchip we have in the computer. By testing modified BIOSes, made by KET, for our desktop motherboard (P5Q-E) we discovered firstly great improvements in performances (especially in games!), but also more stability in overclocking! So BIOS updates are really important.

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Now what to do? I just searched on the internet for the "right tools" to dump, explore and modify my BIOS!

Firstly I've downloaded tha AMI Flash Tool (AFU for the Aptios), and dumped my BIOS. One time via Windows and another via DOS, for security purposes.



As you can see the tools just dump 2048Kb from my ROM instead of the 4096Kb which is. The tools open correctly the ROM image, so I assume it's ok. I've also tried with another third party tool, that just dumped all 4096Kb, but by inspecting him I discovered that there are so much empty bytes (0xFF), so I discarded it. I think that in the first 2048KB there are very important and untouchables things (maybe a self recovery?).

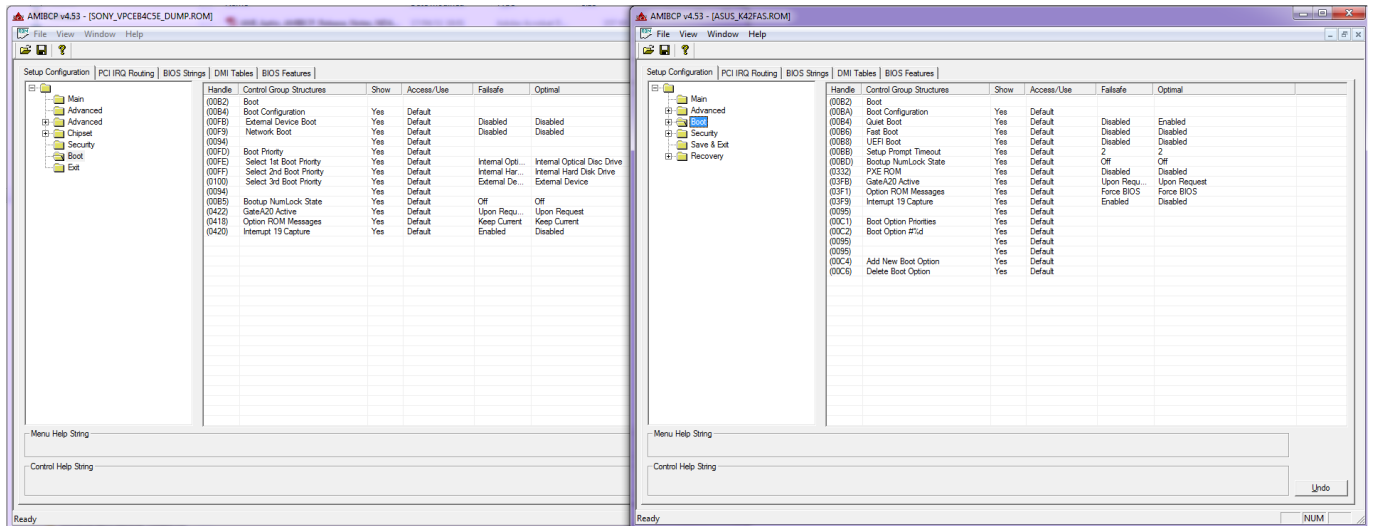
By the way I've just opened the ROM with the right tools and started investigating. All menu options seems visible (unlocked), and there are so many options that not appears in the Setup Menu. By reading on the internet some users says that this options probably are locked thought NVRAM or by a BIOS module. Unfortunately I've not found a good tool to dump my NVRAM, edit it and rewrite, maybe I can unlock all these features, or at least some of the more important (Have I told you that my VAIO does NOT support the auto-switch between Intel HD Graphics and ATI Mobility Radeon when is needed? No? Well, my machine have always the Radeon active, and the battery life is about 1h and 30min, in idle, when I'm REALLY lucky. *SIGH*)

But no EFI boot options... So I continued to search on the internet for more information, but nothing... Recently I had an idea. Just try to search the version number of my BIOS, to see if there are others from others brand. I've searched everything, so why don't try?

I was right. I found a thread where a guy asked help for a boot in UEFI mode, and... He have an ASUS with THE SAME IDENTICAL BIOS AS MY VAIO! But with the differences that he can boot in EFI mode, because there are the options available in the Setup Menu, me not, because I don't have any option!

Look at differences with AMIBCP. The first one is my BIOS menu, the second is that of the ASUS machine, with UEFI boot options!

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I've found the module that have the BIOS menu and replaced in my ROM, but when I try to open it with the AMIBCP it crash. So it can't be replaced. One more thing. In another thread some guys used a "Phoenix Tools" to unlock some restrictions of AMI Aptio BIOSes, and... The ASUS one have the recovery thought USB (when you open the ROM with that tool it search for the right string that should be the name of the ROM that you have to put on the USB stick in case of bricking), my SONY not. Could be because I dumped the ROM, and not downloaded it... But I don't believe it.

By this, I'm afraid to do any serious modification and to flash, especially now that my machine COULD NOT have a recovery system, better don't try.

In the ends:

Sony does NOT want help me and all the peoples that have a the same BIOS mounted on their VAIO (2011 machines are too old! Really!), Sony does NOT provide original ROM or an updated one, wich could improve system performances (new O-ROMs), stability, EFI boot (we need it!) and self-switchable VGA to improve BATTERY LIFE, I cannot modify the BIOS to unlock all these menu, or I don't know how, and I do not want to risk my machine. And... Next machine of course will be not Sony. I would try an Apple instead, because the battery life is very long (about 7-8h in idle, and with the next OS X "Mavericks" should be around 12h, WOW!), Apple support for serious their users and products, OS X works natively (without any hack), and because I'm thinking about to learn some programming for iOS (yes, I know I can also do with any Hackintosh).

So, if you was planning to buy a Sony, think about these words... I ever loved and trusted Sony, but after this, I'm feeling cheated.

Ah, did you know that Sony told me that I CAN'T install Windows 8 because my machine is inadequate? Well I'm waiting Windows 8.1 RTM and I'll post here if is true!

See you!