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Two reviews: Aim-1 & Sol-20

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    - The 1v peak to peak video signal can drive a monitor directly and is also fed to the on-board modulator to drive the domestic TV.

I/O
- On-board UART (Int 5402) which provides serial handling for the on-board cassette interface or the RS232/20mA teletype interface.
- The cassette interface is Kansas City standard at either 300 or 1200 baud. This is a link option on the NASCOM-2.
- The RS232 and 20mA loop connector will interface directly into any standard teletype.
- The input and output sides of the UART are independently switchable between any of the options – i.e. it is possible to use input on the cassette and output on the printer.

PIO
- There is also a totally uncommitted Parallel I/O (MK3881) giving 16, programmable, I/O lines. These are addressable as 2x8 bit ports with complete handshake controls.

On-board Decoding
- The NASCOM-2 makes extensive use of ROM's for on-board control decoding. This reduces the chip count and allows easy changes for specialized industrial use of the board.
- Link options are on-board to allow the Reset control to be re-assigned to an address other than zero.

Character Generators
- The 1K video RAM drives a 2K ROM character generator providing the standard ASCII character set with some additions, 128 characters in all. There is also a socket for an optional graphics ROM on-board.
- The PCB is, of course, of industrial standard, through hole plated, masked and screen printed.

Documentation
- Full construction article is provided for those who buy a kit and an extensive software manual is provided for the monitor and Basic.
- We think no other board has quite so much on it for £295 (plus 8% VAT). If you find a board that has more, buy one for us too!

Nascom Microcomputers
121 High Street Berkhamsted Herts.
(04427) 74343

PRACTICAL COMPUTING July 1979
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- Interfaces S-100 computers to the IEEE-488 instrumentation bus.
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- Three software packages available: North Star DOS/BASIC interface £325

CUSTOM SYSTEMS INTERFACE PACKAGE £100

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PRACTICAL COMPUTING July 1979
In the August issue of PE, we will be presenting COMPUKIT UK 101. It compares very favourably with machines three times its price and is similar to Superboard II (recently reviewed by us) using the same 8K Microsoft, full feature, BASIC which runs faster than other currently available personal computers. Faster than some business computers. Its features are:

- **Up to 8K RAM on board.**
- **Fully expandable via on board sockets.**
- **Cassette interface (CUTS).**
- **VDU—with its own dedicated RAM (1K).**
- **Full ASCII keyboard.**
- **U.H.F. modulator on board.**
- **P.S.U. on board, transformer included in kit.**
- **Full machine code monitor (2K) and I/O utilities in ROM.**
- **Upper and lower case plus graphics and gaming characters.**

It will mate with all Superboard extras. For example:

- **Expander board for up to 24K static RAM.**
- **Mini-floppy interface.**
- **Port adaptor for printer and modem.**
- **OSI 48 line expansion interface.**

Compukit UK 101 will sweep the board in the hobby computer field. It is an excellent design with full feature (not Tiny) BASIC. A complete kit will be available from Computer Components for £219 + VAT.

FULL CONSTRUCTIONAL DETAILS STARTING IN PRACTICAL ELECTRONICS AUGUST ISSUE ON SALE FRIDAY, 13 JULY
NEW DOLPHIN BD 80 PRINTER
Low cost 80 column printer combining simple mechanical design with sophisticated micro-processor control, upper and lower case, 112 c.p.m., many features. Stand, cables, memory buffers available.
E-stock prices from £595.
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SPECIAL OFFERS for July only.
CP/M now available on Micropolis Mod II configured for Sorcerer – £98.
C12 Computer Cassettes 42p each – £3.75 for 10.
5" diskettes – £29.50 per box of 10.
2708 EPROMS – £7.99 each.

NEW PRODUCTS
DOLPHIN PRINTER is plug compatible to the Sorcerer’s serial and parallel interfaces and is supplied in a beige cabinet – plug in and print.
The EXIDY MONITOR and PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT ROM PACS are on demonstration in our showroom.
SORCERER TECHNICAL Manuals and handbooks are available ex-stock.
A vast amount of software is nearing completion, so please keep in touch for early news of availability.
EXIDY SORCERER – A COMPLETE BUSINESS SYSTEM UNDER £3000 + VAT 32K Machine with Z80 processor and 8K ROM BASIC. 128 character ASC11 keyboard and superb graphics.
DOUBLE DRIVE configured MICROPOLIS DISK SYSTEM with MDOS or CP/M 630Kb. Professional quality monitor, various sizes up to 16", Printer – optional 80 or 132 column printer. Software packages are available or can be written to your own specification.
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77/68 BEARBAGS – The well supported 6800 based kit from Newbear. Active user group.
PRINTERS – CENTRONICS, DOLPHIN, OK11.
MONITORS – Professional quality 9", 10", 12", 16" (ideal for teaching).

CROMEMCO Z2 – The powerful one – ASSEMBLER, MACRO ASSEMBLER, FORTRAN, COBOL, DATA BASE MANAGEMENT, WORD PROCESSOR.
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NORTH STAR HORIZON – The popular computer for the business user. Expandable to 48K, 3 diskettes and hardware floating point. Basic system 16K RAM, serial interface. EXTENDED BASIC, DOS, CP/M, mini diskette and power supply.
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SOL 20 – The professional terminal computer renowned for its high quality capacitative keyboard and Word Processing application. Minimum 16K RAM, monitor, serial and parallel interfaces. EXTENDED BASIC, FORTRAN, FOCAL, ASSEMBLER, EDITOR, GAMES, mini floppy disks.
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Circle No. 133 PRACTICAL COMPUTING July 1979
DE BOER

TAKE A NEW LOOK AT SC/MP

Our new SC/MP NIBLE-BASIC Microcomputer kit system is available.

This new National Semiconductor SC/MP-based microprocessor is more versatile than many similar systems. The CPU board includes a pre-programmed 4K Nible-Basic interpreter ROM in conjunction with the SC/MP II. The board also incorporates RS232CV24 input and output buffers. Full kit price, including PCB and instructions £30.95.

SC/MP microprocessor board plus 4K RAM board. Special Price £139.00

When used with our other kits you will have a useful and reliable computing system with plenty of scope for expansion.

To improve your present SC/MP we are offering a special package deal on a complete system.

This package includes:
- SC/MP Microcomputer Board (79075);
- ASCII Keyboard (9965);
- 4K RAM (9885);
- This special package deal includes a complete system with plenty of scope for expansion.
- Many of the kits can be used to supplement other systems.

SC/MP Board and RAM Input/Output Board

These demonstrate the working of the SC/MP chip. Data is fed in using digital switches and read out on LEDs. 9846-1/2 £26.75

CPU Board

This is used in conjunction with the RAM board and contains all the devices needed to control the overall system. 9851 £42.90

Memory Extension Board

This contains 4K of RAM and 1K of PROM. It also houses the multiplexer and the priority decoder. This enables the SC/MP to handle interrupt requests from more than one peripheral device. 9863 £38.50

BUS Board

Simple interconnection system for the Eurocards. 9857 £3.00

HEX input/output board

Used in place of the RAM input/output board, this unit enables the SC/MP to be addressed in hexadecimal. The board also displays Hexadecimal output using seven-segment LED displays. 9893 £62.55

ELBUG

Three pre-programmed EPROMS designed to control the system. 9800E £37.00

Power Supply

Designed to power all the units in the system with room to spare to power additional boards. +5 Volts 3 Amps, -12 Volts 0.5 Amps. 9966 £19.50

4K RAM Card

Full 4096 x 8-bit RAM capacity. More than one of these cards can be added to the system using a simple buffer circuit. 9885 £92.55

Cassette Interface

Record and replay your programs using this National City format interface. Transfer rate up to 1,200 baud. 9905 £16.50

ASCII Keyboard

Uses the AY-5-3276 encoder to provide all the alphanumerics and control functions for the microprocessor system. Full-size keyboards. 9965 £46.50

TV Display Terminal board

Used in conjunction with a TV modulator, this board enables a display format of 16 lines of 64 characters per page to be displayed on a normal television set. Cursor and scrolling functions are included. The unit also offers a choice of six baud rates.

9966 £69.00

TV Modulator

For use with the display board 9967 £6.45

Microprocessor Interface

Input/output buffer to interface RS232C and V24 type equipment with either KIM or our SC/MP system. 79101 £6.75

Further details of this system on request.

TV GAMES COMPUTER KIT

Most TV Games fall into one of two categories. Either their programs are fixed by the type of control IC which generates a few simple ball games, or they can be reprogrammed by plug-in modules. The modules for the latter type tend to be expensive and it is always uncertain just how long the manufacturer will issue new games.

This TV GAMES COMPUTER overcomes these problems by enabling the owner to take advantage of the software available and to devise new games using the keyboard. These programs are then transferred to tape for future use. The game is controlled by the Signetics 2650 Microprocessor IC and offers up to eight colour variations in the display, together with a score count system and sound effects. The unit also includes joystick control for two players.

Full data supplied with the kits.

Keyboard (79073-2) £26.10; Main Board (79073) £166.40; Power Supply (79073-1) £14.20; Modulator (9967) £6.45; Joystick Controls £5.50 each

Special package price of all these kits plus Software record £215.00.

Individual components for all these projects are available, send SAE for prices. All our prices include VAT rate applicable at the present time. We reserve the right to change our prices should this rate be altered.

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U.K. Orders: Send Cheque or Postal Order payable to DE BOER ELEKTRONIKA, 2 Lynn Road, Grimston, Kings Lynn, Norfolk, PE32 1AD. Add 50p for postage and packing. Telephone Hillington (04856) 553. Office hours Mon-Fri 9am-5pm (4p.m. Overseas Orders: De Boer Elektronika, Kleine Berg 41, Eindhoven, Netherlands. Telephone 40-448229 Telex 59307.

PRACTICAL COMPUTING July 1979

MODULAR MICROCOMPUTER SYSTEM KITS

These kits are based on the National Semiconductor SC/MP microprocessor. They offer a unique stage-by-stage building and learning system which develops from a simple digital display unit, through a HEX address and display stage, to a complete minicomputer with ASCII Keyboard and TV display. The system is robustly con-
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- *Title*: A Practical Introduction to Pascal
- *Author*:...
- *Price*: £3.50

**STOCKS**

- *Title*: Programming in Pascal
- *Author*:...
- *Price*: £7.95

**MELDON**

- *Title*: Software Design For Microcomputers
- *Author*:...
- *Price*: £6.60

**TECHNICALS**

- *Title*: Basic Concepts
- *Author*:...
- *Price*: £5.90

**EXPANDABLE**

- *Title*: BASIC Computer Games Volume 1
- *Author*:...
- *Price*: £3.50

**COMPUTER SYSTEM.**

- *Title*: Dynamic Concepts
- *Author*:...
- *Price*: £7.50

**TECHNOLOGICS**

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- *Author*:...
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- *Title*: Programming in WANG BASIC
- *Author*:...
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- *Author*:...
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**Wiring**

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- *Author*:...
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**GROGAN**

- *Title*: A Structured Programming Approach to Data Processing
- *Author*:...
- *Price*: £14.95

**Hartmann**

- *Title*: Motorola 6800 Machine Code
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- *Title*: Concurrent Pascal Compiler for Microcomputers
- *Author*:...
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**VIDEO**
- One page memory
  - *64 characters per line *16 lines per page
- Full 128 ASCII character set
  - *96 upper and lower case characters *32 control symbols
- Comprehensive cursor controls
  - *Left/right/up/down *CR/LF *Clear/home/line-erase
- PROM translation from inbound characters, giving:-
  - *Programmable coding for cursor commands
  - *Programmable display control for each input code
- Cursor command codes can be displayed using:-
  - *Display key for protocol debugging *V28 input bit 8 under remote software control
- European compatible composite video output for:-
  - *TV monitor, or *Modified TV set

**V28 I/O**
- High/low rates externally switchable and jumper selectable from:-
  - *9600/4800/2400/1200/600/300/75 bpd/sec.
  - *220/110 bpd/sec (NOTE: at high receive speeds, remote software should allow 8.3 ms for CR, LF and 152 ms for Clear)
  - Odd, Even or No Parity *Full duplex or local mode
  - One or two stop bits *V24 serial I/O using standard 25 pin socket

**KEYBOARD**
- 72 key ultra-reliable solid state contactless keyboard
- Standard ASCII layout plus programmable cursor control keypad
- QWERTY standard, AZERTY optional extra
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  - *Displays control characters for easy protocol debugging

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[ ] I enclose my cheque
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PRACTICAL COMPUTING July 1979
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**DESK TOP COMPUTERS**

A really affordable and reliable computing system comprising a commercial microcomputer with dual disc drives, VDU and printer, with accounting and payroll software duties now available to businessmen for just £4,500 exc. VAT. Full details of this and other systems available.

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DIODES/ZENERS

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Sockets/BRIDGES

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TRANSISTORS, LEDS, etc.

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9000 SERIES QTY.

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MICRO'S, RAM'S, CPUs, E-PROMS

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PRACTICAL COMPUTING

July 1979
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- Computer Games.
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Just by entering phonetic text (as in the sentence at the top of the page). Microspeech with the MSP2 software can make your computer speak. MSP2 uses only 4K of memory. Every extra 1K of buffer space can store 90 seconds of speech.

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Intel SBC-80, LSI-11, S100 and general purpose cards, modules and LSI ICS. Some can be operated together for colour or TV picture + Alphanumerics or graphics + alphanumerics.

<table>
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<th>EG</th>
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<tr>
<td>MTX 1632 16 rows 32 chars module</td>
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<tr>
<td>ALT 250 x 256 graphics (S100)</td>
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<td>MSBC—2480 SBC—80 24 row 80 char</td>
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<td>MDC—512 (PDP-11) 512 x 512 graphics</td>
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<tr>
<td>MTX—A1 uPC controller—KBD + LEDs</td>
<td>28.00</td>
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Three Trumps from Acorn

Acorn Controller
Designed as an industrial controller module, it is based on the 6502 CPU with 2K Eprom, 1.25K ram and 32 I/O lines. In eurocard format it is provided with an onboard monitor (2 x 74S571) giving comprehensive development and debugging facilities. Also available in minimum configuration for low cost OEM applications.

The Acorn Microcomputer
The Acorn controller module mounted beneath a matching eurocard with hex keyboard, 8 digit seven segment display and CUTS tape interface requires only a single unstaabilised power supply to form the powerful Acorn microcomputer.

Order form
Send to: Acorn Computers Ltd. 4AMarket Hill, Cambridge, Cambs.
(qty) Acorn Microcomputer(s) in kit form at £65.00 plus £5.20 VAT
(qty) Acorn Microcomputer(s) assembled and tested at £75.00 plus £6.00 VAT
(qty) Acorn controller(s) (minimum configuration) at £35.00 plus £2.80 VAT
(qty) Acorn Memory(s) assembled and tested at £95.00 plus £7.60 VAT
N.B. Price shown is for full 8K of ram, prices for smaller memory options and Eprom additions available on request.

Although designed for expandability, the Acorn Microcomputer is a complete development system for the Acorn controller and together with the Acorn Users Manual provides the perfect introduction to hex programming; the carefully optimised monitor has the following functions:
- System Program
- Set of sub-routines for use in programming
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THE TRIED AND TESTED MINICOMPUTER SYSTEM THAT EXPANDS TO MEET YOUR NEEDS

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- *NEW* board with 16 registers
- *NEW* modules: DMA and ALU
- stable crystal clock
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The personal computer division of HL Audio Ltd
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- GIANT BOARD WIRING AND TESTED... £37.50
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- EXPANSION POWER SUPPLY... £197.15
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- ASCII KEYBOARD... £54.83
- ASC II KEYBOARD... £76.22
- ASCII KEYBOARD WIRING AND TESTED... £14.58
- ASCII DELUXE CABINET... £24.85
- RF MODULATOR to use with TV... £3.60

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- ELF II TINY BASIC CASSETTE TAPE - makes programming even easier. Complies with the ability to run and edit from any point in the memory
- ELF II TINY BASIC also includes: 16 bit integer arithmetic ± x ± 0 and 26 variables A-Z and also comes fully documented with an alphanumeric generator for direct display on your TV...
- Elf-Bug Monitor Cassette substitutes the need to single step through a program to find the controls, with the ability to run and stop from any point in the memory
- SHORT COURSE IN PROGRAMMING by Tom Pittman. Written specifically for the ELF II as a step-by-step course which fully exploits the potential of ELF II...
- SHORT COURSE IN TINY BASIC by Tom Pittman teaches how to program in Tiny Basic...

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- multi-tasking
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- 16-bit microcomputer time-sharing system

Software by SOURCE (UK)

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Circle No. 147

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Complete kit of parts available only £286 (+ VAT)

Basic in Rom: a powerful 2k Tiny basic resident on board, makes Triton unique, easy to use and versatile.

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Single Board: Holds up to 8k of memory, 4K RAM and 4K ROM, supplied with 3K ROM and 2K RAM.

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Cassette Interface: crystal controlled Modern tape I/O with auto start/stop + “named” file search.

UHF TV Interface: On board uhf modulator, plugs into TV aerial socket.

Comes Complete with KEYBOARD, CASE, POWER SUPPLY, THRO-HOLE PLATED QUALITY P.C.B. FULL DOCUMENTATION POWERFUL 1K MONITOR & 2K TINY BASIC PLUS ALL COMPONENTS INCL. 1C SOCKETS. NOTE TV SET & CASSETTE NOT INCLUDED.

Expansion: Expand your Triton simply and easily with our new 8-slot motherboard complete with its own P.S.U. takes 8 plug-in Euro cards. Plug-in 8K RAM card now available.

TRITON HUMBUG VS 1. Runs in 4K on main board. Extended Basic includes: full monitor, autostart, password, directory search. You return the eproms from Triton and we supply four new ones, fully programmed and documented. £25 + VAT, for details send £1 and SAE.

All components can be bought separately and eleven packs can be purchased on an easy-to-buy scheme. See catalogue.

EXPANSION MOTHERBOARD Kit £50
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8K EPROM BOARD Kit . . . . £97

Full details available in our brand new 1979 computer products catalogue, so order your copy right now! Don’t forget VAT is extra at 8%.

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To: TRANSAM COMPONENTS LTD., 12 CHAPEL STREET, NW1

Please send me the following

1. A copy of your latest catalogue I enclose 30p + S.A.E. 9 x 7
2. A copy of the Triton Manual I enclose £5 + 70p P & P
3. A complete kit of parts for Triton Computer, £286 + VAT + £4 P & P
4. A Printed Circuit Board £50 + VAT & £1 P & P

TOTAL ENCLOSED £

Cheque, Money Order, etc.

BARCLAYCARD, ACCESS, VISA & MASTER CHARGE ARE WELCOME SEND YOUR CARD NUMBER WITH ORDER

PRACTICAL COMPUTING July 1979
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£245.50 + VAT

FEATURES INCLUDE:
* 20 COLUMN PRINTER
* 20 CHARACTER
ALPHANUMERIC DISPLAY
* FULL 54 KEY TERMINAL-STYLE
KEYBOARD
* TTY INTERFACE
TWIN CASSETTE INTERFACE
* RAM — 1K TO 4K OPTIONS
OPTIONAL EXTRAS INCLUDE:
8K 'BASIC' INTERPRETER ROM
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4K ASSEMBLER ROM — £59.50
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CASE (Including Power Supply)
— £78.00
EXPANSION MOTHERCARD
— £136.50

AIM 65 comes to you fully built and tested with a full alphanumeric keyboard, 20 character display and a 20 column printer — for keeping a permanent record of all your work. Available in 1K- and 4K-byte RAM versions, AIM 65 is designed around the 6502 CPU, which has 64K address capability with 13 addressing modes. This is the microprocessor at the heart of many other, more costly, systems such as PET and APPLE.

AIM 65 has a 4K ROM-resident monitor program for all peripheral control and user programming functions. Spare sockets are included for expanding on-board program memory via user PROM-based programs and/or Rockwell assembler, text editor and BASIC interpreter plug-in options. AIM 65 has a connector for external access to system bus for memory and I/O expansion, a separate connector for interfacing a teletype and two cassette recorders. There is a user-dedicated Versatile Interface Adaptor, featuring three 8-bit, bidirectional ports (two parallel, one serial) and two 16-bit interval time/event counters — thus allowing the user to interface his own system, without extra interface devices in many cases. AIM 65 is probably the most effective, low-cost microcomputer development system available — an invaluable educational aid to first time users and an ideal general purpose micro-computer for the engineer.

AIM 65 is available in the UK only from PELCO ELECTRONICS LTD at £245.50 + VAT, complete with User’s Manual and Schematic, R6500 Programming and Hardware Manuals and a handy pocket reference card.

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PRACTICAL COMPUTING July 1979
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The VDU that fits most micro, mini and mainframe systems—lots of built-in features.

PRICE FROM £600

THE CUB
An economic answer to simple VDU needs, 64 x 16ch, cursor control.

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The feature packed INTERTUBE compares with terminals costing up to three times as much. Protected fields, page editing, self test, cursor control, graphics, 28 programmable function keys—all a few of the many features.

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Acoustic data modem speeds up to 300 bauds—works either at the computer or terminal end of a datalink.

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The portable hard copy terminal that's built to last—thousands of satisfied users.

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Probably the best value 80 col, 112 cps printer on the market.

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Flexible floppy micro system.

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Top quality IBM compatible single sided floppies plain label from leading manufacturer.

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CIRCLE NO. 153

PRACTICAL COMPUTING July 1979
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* Random & sequential access
* 100k on each drive (200 k on double density)
* ex-stock

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24k - £320 +VAT
16k and 32k also available
All ex-stock

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Publisher's Letter

READERS whose memories stretch for a year - a long time in microcomputers - will recall that what is now the Microcomputer Show was last year the Do-It-Yourself Computer Show. Then, too, Practical Computing contained the official Show Guide.

That 60-page issue was sold out very quickly and is now a much-sought-after collectors' item. This year's bumper Show Edition contains 136 pages but the price remains at the original 50p.

It is not just Practical Computing which has grown so dramatically in the last year but also, as will be particularly obvious to Show visitors, the whole microcomputer industry.

You will be faced with a tremendous choice of very sophisticated hardware. To some it might seem a bewildering choice, and it would be worthwhile studying our guide to buying your first computer (page 53) before making such a momentous decision.

Assimilating the latest Practical Computing Buyers' Guide (page 125) and stand-by-stand review (page 63) should then enable you to focus your attention on where your time, and eventually your money, is best spent at the Bloomsbury Centre from July 5-7.

Enjoy the show, buy wisely, and by all means visit our stand to browse through the back numbers or to talk to the people who make this your magazine.

Our Feedback columns offer readers the opportunity of bringing their computing experience and problems to the attention of others, as well as to seek our advice or to make suggestions, which we are always happy to receive. Make sure you use Feedback—it is your chance to keep in touch.

User groups
we are aware that there are about 30 members of the ACC in our area but from the regular appearance of your magazine in newsagents we suspect that there are many people "going it alone".

We would find regular exposure in a "User Groups Page" very helpful. If space is a problem a diary would be acceptable.

Our one Tandy owner was pleased to find the TRS-80 Forum in Practical Computing and in view of this I am surprised that you do not exploit the 10K or so Nascom owners - not me, I have a 6800 - by having regular programs for them; likewise, the other popular systems.

On the subject of software, would it not be possible to have all machine code cross-compiled to cover all the common processors, and also to detail changes of Basic programs for different machines?

Finally, since several of our members know nothing of the general electronics hobby press, it might be helpful if components suppliers advertised in your magazine.

N. P. Butcher
Bushey Heath, Wafford.

Initial system
I WOULD be grateful for your advice on an initial computer system for hobby/scientific/possible commercial use which may be expanded into a multi-user system at a later stage:

Cost, £2,000 including VAT;
Memory initially 32K, expandable to 64K;
Fortran IV, Assembler, Basic, Algol and, eventually Cobol;
Dual floppy, CP/M operating system, file-orientated, IBM-compatible, 8in or 256K to run reasonable-size Fortran programs;
To reduce initial costs, printer and possibly VDU to be added later; if a VDU has to be obtained - no UHF TV output - which ones are best suited to 80-character screen width?

Graphics capability later, high resolution; later, input/output tape or cassette; good quality documentation, reliability - little or no maintenance costs; low power consumption - not affected by mains variation;
Where can discounts be obtained?

Summing up, maximum reliability and expansion, plus performance, for minimum cost.

M. J. Stalker
Farnborough, Hants.

Bank switching
I was interested to note Allen Secker's letter in your April issue and your comment concerning the availability of bank switching boards.

I am a main importer for Imsai in South-east England and can confirm that Imsai has now discontinued manufacturing the IMM bank switching board which permitted megabyte addressing.

As I understand it, there was insufficient demand on the American market for such a facility on microcomputers. There are, however, doubtless dealers in the U.S. who have stocks of this board; and if any individual or company requests it, I will gladly attempt to trace one.

Imsai is concentrating on the VDP and PCS microcomputers.

Graham Jenkins
Corner Computing Services
Epsom.

Apart from that, we hear also that Imsai recently filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection. This is a provision in the U.S. legal code which gives a company a few months to put its affairs into order, if it can.

On the other hand, we have also heard from another Imsai distributor, Computer Mart of Norwich. "In answer to your comments on bank-switched memory boards, we handle all products made by Imsai."

"Bank-switched memories are available in three sizes: 16K @ £590 + VAT; 32K @ £867 + VAT; 64K @ £1698 + VAT. Please check with our office for prices".

Educational software
I AM a psychologist working in the field of employment rehabilitation and am seeking information on educational software packages suitable for commercially-available micros. My interests range from computer-assisted education in simple arithmetical skills to the teaching of basic computer programming. Any information would be most gratefully received.

Peter Spencer
Employment Rehabilitation Centre
Dovedale Avenue
Ingol, Preston.
(continued on page 35)
Pet Expansion

Complete with 4K disk operating system in ROM, plugs into Expandapet memory. Adds 15 new commands to Pet's Basic to give full disk extended Basic Loads 8K in 2.6 seconds. Automatic reorganisation of free space. Utility Disk

**£833 + V.A.T.**

Expandapet memory
Powered by Pet's own powersupply and mounted internally in 5-10 minutes without special tools.

- 16K: **£261 + V.A.T.**
- 24K: **£320 + V.A.T.**
- 32K: **£374 + V.A.T.**

All units are fully built and tested.

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Apple II was the original with full colour high resolution microcomputer Basic, and it is still the best. With a very wide range of expansion available, including disk drive, interface cards, voice recognition card, light pen and many others.

Apple II has been well tried and approved by the public (over 200,000 sold) because of its thoroughly professional design and high quality engineering. You cannot get better value for money. Please send us a large s.a.e. for further details.

With 16K user RAM only **£820 + V.A.T.**

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Super Board II

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Bewildered

HAS Commodore booted? I refer to the new 16K Pet with large keyboard. Certainly I like the look of the machine, and the resident monitor is most useful for anyone in the machine code environment, although the manual I had with the unit didn’t explain how to call Monitor.

I must thank my local supplier, HB Computers of Kettering, for help in finding the magical instruction which is SYS (64785) — and also for explaining that some of the Basic subroutines are different on the new models.

After finding that several programs written for the 8K Pets didn’t work on the 16K, however, I looked closer at the memory map to find that most of the zero-page locations have been changed.

Perhaps Commodore was aiming for an improved ROM — but it has proved to be a disaster for me and, I suspect, other users. Any machine code programs which change various pointers in zero-page or programs which make use of free areas of zero-page will almost certainly go haywire. Microchess 2, for instance, does not work.

Another annoying fact is that the upper- and lower-case configuration has been changed. On the 8K models, a POKE 59468,4 will change graphics into lower-case and leave the upper-case characters as they were, but on the new 16K model the same command causes graphics to become upper-case and the upper-case to become lower-case. A program containing lower-case output really looks odd on this machine.

If you are now suitably confused, join the club; I’m still bewildered and would look forward to any comments from Commodore.

V. A. Withnall
Rushden, Northamptonshire.

For new owners

I have recently started a club for owners of SC/MP based machines like the Mk 14. Initially, the club consists of a circulating newsletter to which ideas and programs can be added by members.

For anyone who is interested, I would be glad to add names to the existing circulation list. The object of the newsletter is to help new owners to get to grips with their machine and provide a means of communication between members.

Geoff Phillips
8 Poolsford Road
London NW9 6HP.

Suggestions

I would like to suggest two additions to your magazine — a Hardware at Chip Level section for those who wish to build or modify their own computers, and a readers’ advertisements section for those wishing to buy or sell computers, chips or software.

I have a personal interest in both of these since I have acquired for £10 a 16-bit minicomputer complete with high-speed optical paper tape reader but without keyboard, VDU, printer, or other human interfaces. There is one major snag — all the manuals are in Japanese, so I am thinking of taking out the CPU and replacing it with a micro (Z-80) but using the existing power supplies and memory — 12K x 16 bits = 24K x 8 bits of old-fashioned non-volatile core memory.

I have a Honeywell 8100 instrumentation tape deck which needs attention/rebuilding of the signal processing circuits. It is a 1in. wide tape, 10in. NAB spool capacity, four-speed (1T, 15T, 30ips) eight-channel machine with fully working tape transport (three motors), but I haven’t the time to do what is necessary.

If anyone would like to take it for the giveaway price of £50, including five tapes, I shall send a donation to Practical Computing. Two other damaged tape decks (three motors each) are also available for £15 the pair.

I enjoy the magazine and wish you well in your contribution to smashing the barriers of ignorance and fear about micros.

Finally, I would like to contact Jack Pike (Feedback, May) of Chawston, Bedfordshire about his Adventure II game and to inform him that I am working on a text-packing routine requiring two bytes per character, which uses automatic spacing and the facility to insert standard ASCII codes at any point in such text, except in mid-word.

John E. Foggitt
Stony Stratford
Milton Keynes, Bucks

Easy solution

If some of your readers are, like myself, fellow Nascom users but are tired of waiting for Nascom to produce a decent-size Basic interpreter, as opposed to its Tiny Basic, they might be interested in an 8K Basic which I have found, available on tape, from my local computer shop — Crystal Electronics of Torquay.

Although not an ideal solution, it eats into RAM — the facilities of an 8K Basic, including extensive string handling and floating point maths, transforms Nascom to bring it on a par with Pet and/ or Tandy TRS-80.

M. Dwyer
Malborough, Kingsbridge, Devon
Prepare for arrival of world's fastest eight-bit micro

INTEL is about to announce the 8088, the world's fastest eight-bit microprocessor. 'Fast' refers simply to the amount of work it can accomplish.

The point about the 8088 is that it combines some of the virtues of the Intel 16-bit chip set, the 8086, with many of the more desirable attributes of eight-bit Intel micros. The 8086 has a 16-bit internal architecture - much faster internal operation than an eight-bit processor, full software compatibility with the 8086, and a clever instruction set which allows programs to be used with other eight-bit machines.

The 8088 can process eight or 16-bit data in single, string, or block form; and 20-bit addressing means it can access directly up to one megabyte of memory. There are 24 addressing modes, which will ease the programmer's task and facilitate development of more efficient program code.

The 8086 contains many hardware arithmetic instructions but in addition to its number-crunching capabilities, there are many string operations specifically intended for alphanumeric - block moves, string comparisons, data scans, data translations. Internally, the 8086 looks well set-up for word processing and business equipment applications.

A 16-bit data bus has, in theory, twice the bandwidth of an eight-bit bus; but, like the 8086, the 8088 has an 'instruction look-ahead' feature, an instruction queue which increases the efficient utilisation of the data bus. Throughout comparisons then become applications-dependent but Intel says that, typically, the eight-bit 8088 will manage 70 percent of the throughput of the 16-bit 8086.

Intel retained an eight-bit bus structure to maintain compatibility with existing hardware; an eight-board can be re-designed and upgraded without changing backplanes, connectors, memory structure, or peripheral controllers. A bus eight bits wide also offers savings in drivers, transceivers and board space. You can use the many multiple-function devices already available for the eight-bit family.

Despite the intellectual enthusiasm for 16-bit micros, there are many applications for which they are unnecessary. Personal computing is probably one. On the other hand, it would be pleasant to have 16-bit throughput if you did not have to pay 16-bit prices and wait for the development of 16-bit support chips.

We expect to see the Intel 8088 appearing in many new products.

Infectious enthusiasm

ENTHUSIASM generated for the 6502 from the 6502 Program Exchange is infectious, particularly if you possess a Sym, Kim, Rainbow, Apple ITT 2520, Jolt, or an Ohio Scientific microcomputer.

The Program Exchange lives up to its name. The latest newsletter dwells at length on XPL0, a compiler language which outperformed the Ohio Scientific Basic dramatically in a 1977 Kilobaud test.

We like the look of XPL0 because it has many of the virtues of Pascal - intermediate code, simple to understand the principles, highly structured format - without the disadvantages. It is easy to understand the code in XPL0 - unlimited procedure names help, too - and in general it looks a friendly language.

Does anyone use it? If not, $50 buys a cassette and manual.

Other offerings from the Exchange include a kind of super-Focal called FCL-65 - a step up from Basic or Fortran. There is Tiny Basic, of course, for a bargain $10, and a good-looking Experiments Manual for $15. There are several games and systems programs at bargain prices, including the classic Wumpus in machine language for Kim or Sym.

The 6502 Program Exchange is at 2920 Moana, Reno, NV 89509, U.S. Contact the company before sending money.

Over-the-counter market survey


The researchers reckon that the so-called hobby shop will become the normal mode of distribution to end-users, although the hobbyist component among the customer base is about at its peak.

More growth is due from small business, the educational end, and other establishments; the big boom is forecast in the consumer sector.

This is how F&S sees the revenue split in percentage terms for the immediate future:

Establishments 66 48 55
Hobbyists 22 10 5
Consumer 12 42 40

Add-on purchases run from 1.5 times to twice the initial investment so there's an opportunity for peripheral makers. "Software is the crucial variable" in buying decisions, so there may be scope there, too. F&S reckons that the average annual turnover of computer stores is about $255,000 now. Strategic Business Services agrees, more or less, with a 1977 figure at $220,000.

SBS isn't afraid to list the technological developments in distributed computing. It still estimates a 40 percent annual growth rate, to reach total revenues of $945 million by 1983. That's a little more pessimistic than Frost & Sullivan.

Newsletter for Sorcerer

SUBSCRIPTION orders are being sought for what we understand to be the only independent user newsletter dedicated to the Exidy Sorcerer. The first issue will be available shortly. Its name is Source and its contents are promised to be of general interest to Sorcerer owners, program listings, how-to-do-it articles, hardware and software reviews, and letters from readers.

The publisher is a Michigan firm which already produces The Paper for owners of the Commodore Pet, Rainbow (for Apple II owners) and The Viper (dedicated to the RCA 68700 VISA).

"Our intention is to provide useful information at all levels of expertise," Aresco declares. "Many publications offer information incomprehensible to beginners and to intermediate level computerists.

"Aresco policy is that people have to start from the beginning and there's no place for them to obtain beginner-level information. Then the intermediate people are stuck, because the "hacker" information is too technical to be comprehended without an extensive knowledge of electronics machine language. Orders for the Source should be sent to Aresco, PO Box 1142, Columbia MD 21044. Master Charge (Access) and Visa (Barclaycard) are accepted. Overseas subscriptions are $25 including airmail postage if desired.

Following our review of the Exidy Sorcerer in May, we hear that S Gimblett of HMS Neptune, Fareham, Hants, is writing a U.K. user's group. Contact him if you want to participate.
All ship-shape and Bristol fashion for Image Data

BRISTOL seems rapidly to be becoming the Tottenham Court Road of the U.K. Image Data has opened a headquarters and manufacturing facility there.

The British-owned company will be manufacturing its Image Data Eight microcomputer and the facility is expected to create more than 100 jobs for electronic assemblers, all to be recruited locally.

The microcomputer was designed and produced originally as a development system for Image Data but it found market appeal, so the company decided to produce it in quantity and is increasing production from 20 to 100 systems a month.

It is built around a series of printed circuit boards and provides Motorola 6800 and Intel 8085 processors compatible with other PCBs in the bus system.

There are two systems accommodating six and 12 boards which offer 4K and 8K RAM, 1K increments of ROM, CRT, keyboard, Tele-type I/O, cassette interfaces and line printer output. Maximum storage is 40K RAM and 24K ROM. A floppy disc board will follow.

The Image Data Eight houses the processor in a cage design which the company believes will appeal to the education market, where it can be sold as a construction kit. The end-user, OEM and “the high end of the hobbyist market” will provide the rest of the customer base.

Software includes 8K Basic, Editor and Assembler programs, resident monitor for all peripherals, and diagnostic support for cassettes. After-sales support is available with a 24-hour turnaround of replacement boards.

Cost range is from £500 to £2,500, depending on peripherals and model size. Only a few PCBs are needed for a minimum system, and expansion does not enforce scrapping earlier investments.

The Image Data Eight is available only from Image Data at 1-4, Portland Square, Bristol, BS2 8RR. Tel 0272 402484.

Motorola tests

FIRST successful tests on parts of the Motorola 64K RAM have been carried out at ICL. “The Motorola samples worked perfectly”, said Bill Talbot, ICL technical director, who was described by a Motorola spokesman as “a hard man to please”.

It looks as though Motorola will be first in the great 64K RAM race but industry pundits believe the device is not as far advanced as Motorola might suggest.

ICL admits that it will take some months before all checks have been carried out and it will be totally satisfied with the product.

The Japanese firm, Hitachi, is likely to second-source M68000 microprocessor products. Hitachi will manufacture the range of products which the new processor will create.

The processor is of an advanced 16-bit design for high-level language implementation with 32-bit internal processing capability.

The second Motorola semiconductor, Microcomputer - last year called Micro Forum until the Business Equipment Trade Association claimed copyright on the name, hence the change – took place last month at the Institution of Electrical Engineers, Savoy Place, London, and the focus of attention was the 6800 processor.

Five top Motorola men discussed all the latest microprocessors and memories, applications of the single chip 68001 microcomputer and the high-level 6809.

Pascal developed for SWTP 6800

THERE ARE many very clever and very enthusiastic micro-oriented people in the Netherlands. Some of them are part of Lucidata and they have developed a Pascal for the SWTP 6800.

By popular request, we are preparing an item on the pros and cons of Pascal as a high-level language; it does particularly well as an alternative to Basic, its advocates say.

For this one you need the SWTP system – or an equivalent M6800-based microcomputer – running the TSC FLEX 1.0 operating with a mini-floppy disc and 16KB (more memory means faster execution).

The run-time system interfaces with FLEX. It includes a paging facility which is invoked automatically if there is insufficient real memory for a large program.

In a 32KB system with dual floppy discs, Pascal programs can be compiled at more than 80 lines per minute according to Lucidata. With only 16K bytes, compilation is at 35 lines per minute under the paging mode. Programs are claimed to execute “tens of times faster” than with conventional interpreters.

Further details from Lucidata, Oosteinde 223, Vourburg 2271 EG (ZH), Netherlands.

Price list

RAPID RECALL has published a comprehensive price list which provides details of microcomputer, memory, analogue and data acquisition equipment from Digital Equipment Corporation, Intel, Intersil, Opto 22 and ITT.

The list is organised by product group rather than by manufacturer, which makes it easy for you to identify the system or component you might be seeking.

The price list is available at £1 from Rapid Recall, 6 Soho Mills, Wooburn Green, Bucks. If you buy something from Rapid Recall it is free.

Comart was neglected

OUR review of the North Star Horizon homed-on one of the major U.K. dealers but neglected the other. Comart in Huntingdon has the Horizon; it also sells the Processor Technology Sol – reviewed in this issue – and the Cromemco range (the Z-2D was reviewed in February).

Comart offers nationwide maintenance cover by virtue of its contract with the specialist service organisation CFM. It also has nine distributors.

Converting I/O devices

PROLIFERATION of electrical typewriters has for some time encouraged people to convert them for use as I/O devices on personal computers.

Now a U.S. company, Rochester Data, has a device, I/O Pak, which fits over a typewriter keyboard – you affix two mountings to hold it in place. The I/O Pak comprises a bank of solenoids mounted in an array which fits directly over the keyboard of the typewriter. Energising a specific solenoid causes a specific typewriter key to be depressed, thus printing a character.

Electrical actuation of the solenoid is done by self-contained drive electronics which operate in response to the selection of a pair of one-out-of-eight control lines.

The unit is claimed to operate virtually any electric typewriter with powered function keys with no mechanical modifications to the typewriter. All adjustments are self-contained in the I/O Pak, for which it is claimed easy initial installation, “instant detachability and replacement”, “modest power consumption and high reliability”.

The interface appears to be a six-bit parallel one, and naturally you, or your computer, have to provide some external timing.

The I/O Pak cost $395 from Rochester Data, 3100 Monroe Avenue, Rochester, NY 14618.
AIM-65 only cheaply
with the introduction of higher-density memory components, a new group of single-board computers is emerging. They do not exactly constitute the method of operation, and designs are not so different from previous boards to justify this label.

The AIM-65, produced by Rockwell and available here from Pelco Electronics, is one of this group. Strangely enough, the newer systems, which include the Ohio Superboard II and the Synertek Sym I, all use the 6502 microprocessor, as utilised in the Pet and Apple II.

Again, like the Ohio Superboard (reviewed in Practical Computing, June, 1979) the reputation of the AIM-65 precedes it to some extent. It has been hailed as "the best-engineered cheap 6502-based system".

Facilities

The AIM-65 is a single-board computer offering as the input device a 54-key alphanumeric keyboard in the standard QWERTY typewriter layout. Also on the board is a 20-character alphanumeric LED strip display and a column thermal printer.

The processor is the Rockwell 6502 running with a clock speed of 1MHz and an 8K monitor in ROM, plus 1KB of user RAM; the user memory is expandable on-board to 4K. An audio cassette interface programmable for two tape recording formats is also provided.

Setting-up

The AIM-65 is a fully-assembled unit. It requires only the connection of the keyboard to the computer board via a ribbon cable and i.e. "headers" - they did not seem to be very robust and required careful handling.

For power, the AIM-65 requires a single 5V supply at two amps to work; but to have printer operation, a separate 24V power supply is much more convenient. A 24V 0.25 amp supply has also been used; the specified power rating of 0.5A when idle, peaking to approximately 0.25 amps during a print cycle.

The meter may well have been slow in response but there's certainly a discrepancy between this and the Rockwell 64K specification. Power consumption was metered at 0.05 amps when idle, peaking to approximately 0.25 amps during a print cycle. The meter may well have been slow in response but there's certainly a discrepancy between this and the Rockwell 64K power rating of 0.5A when idle and 2.5 amps. Another point worth noting was that the 24V power supply used with the printer was limited by current on our system to 1A and at no time did it look over-killed. Power consumption was metered at approximately 0.25 amps.

Printer

The 20-column thermal matrix printer uses a roll of 2 in. (50cm) wide paper. The print quality is good, and it can output at approximately 90 lines per minute.

Paper loading

Paper loading is easy once you know how, but try to find out how in the users' guide and the roll seems to last and last. One tends to forget how useful it is to be able to refer back to what has been done - a printer allows you to do this. Messages and reminders can also be printed by involving the text editor - using a small buffer area if memory space is tight - editing and printing line by line.

One tends to forget how very useful it is to be able to refer back to what has been done - a printer allows you to do this. Messages and reminders can also be printed by involving the text editor - using a small buffer area if memory space is tight - editing and printing line by line.

The character set available to the printer is small and there is a wraparound. Our demonstration program of the printer output and character set also illustrates the use of the printer for printer comments and messages. 

Vincent Tseng

by Vincent Tseng

character is easy to read, even if a few of them are a little contorted. The display uses 16-segment LEDs and for this reason is upper-case only.

Firmware

Two 4K-byte ROMs of the 2332 type contain the monitor and utility firmware. This monitor is very impressive. It does the usual display/change memory or registers, start execution and tape dump.

What makes the AIM-65 outstanding is its powerful debugging package. It allows the user to set up to four software breakpoints and under single-step operation - switch-selectable on the board - it can do an instruction trace and a register contents trace, with automatic disassemi-
Micro with Better

Cassette interface

The audio cassette tape interface boasts two recording formats, one at a standard 1,200 baud and the other a Kim-1 compatible version. The tape recorder has to be connected via the board's 'application' edge connector J1 but sadly no edge connector socket was supplied on our kit, and it is not good practice to solder directly on to the board's edge connector gold-plated fingers. Your reviewer, fortunately, was able to commandeer an edge-connector socket from a Kim-1 and connected the AIM-65 to a cassette recorder.

The AIM-65 does not record and play back well with cassette recorders with automatic recording level controls. This restriction probably covers almost all the current cheap cassette units; it applied to ours, and we confirmed this with other users. Apparently, the AIM-65 needs a manual recording level to overcome the slow time response of the 'automatic level control' recorder.

Inconsistent

The setting-up procedure and 'Sync' program in Section 9 of the Users' Manual was tried. This could be set up – adjusting VR1 – so that almost the full range of the playback volume control was accepted by the 'Sync' program.

When data was recorded it was very inconsistent on loading and playback. Data recording was tried with both formats and various impedance-matching resistors were used, but all to no avail.

This was particularly disappointing because the AIM-65 has some file-handling capability we wanted to exercise. A user's file name can be given up to five characters – and on playback the AIM-65 will search for the file name. At 1,200 baud, recording and playback for 256 bytes was fairly fast.

Two recorders

Remote start/stop controls are also available, so that two recorders can be used – one set to record, one for playback. This is suggested for use with the optional extra assembler in ROM. It is a pity it does not work well with cheap recorders.

The edge connector, incidentally, is the same as for the Kim-1 – a double-sided 44-pin connector with 4mm pitch.

There appears at first sight to be a fairly weighty documentation pack with the AIM-65, but the most useful and relevant ones are the AIM-65 Users' Guide of almost 500 pages, the 6500 programmers' reference card and the AIM-65 Monitor Listings.

The two other substantial books are reference manuals for the 6502 and not specifically for the AIM-65.

The Users' Guide has all the information, but it is not very well laid-out. For example, to try to find how to load printer paper from the index, you might reach page 1-14 by yourself; on it there are instructions on how to load the paper, but no diagram showing where the relevant parts are located. That is on pages 11-15 in the chapter covering troubleshooting, warranty and servicing.

Similarly for the cassette, Section 2.9 states: "We assume that the cassette recorder has been attached previously in position 1 according to the instruction in section 9'.

There are, however, a few examples, but not enough programming examples, and a listing of a useful sub-monitor with many extra facilities, but it uses some 457 bytes; and as the available user's RAM area on a 1K model is only 512 bytes, memory expansion is needed for this to be useful.

Compensation

Overall, the documentation at least has all the relevant information but it is not easy to follow for a first-time user and is a headache for pure reference usage.

It's a pity we were not able to test the AIM-65 with the Basic-in-ROM option because this would have taken the programming to a quicker, higher level.

Ideally, we would prefer to have a TV interface as well, but the printer compensates to some extent for this.

It has been claimed that the AIM-65 is hardware-compatible with the Kim-1 – and therefore the Synertek Sym-1, too. This could mean that a TV interface available for the Kim-1 could be used with the AIM-65 but it is expensive and the software interfacing would be tedious.

The Kim-1 tape format is not that useful, either, because many of the better Kim programs use subroutines in the Kim-1 ROM monitor which is obviously different from the AIM.

Conclusions

• This is the only cheap microcomputer with its own built-in printer. It is a worthwhile microcomputer offering the right types of facilities. As it stands it could do with more RAM (expandable on board); then it becomes a reasonably useful tool to learn assembler programming for the 6502.

• With the Basic, which was not tested, it is certainly worth consideration for home use. The cassette interface could be improved to work with cheap recorders and the manuals could be made more readable, but the AIM-65 is a very pleasant system.

PRACTICAL COMPUTING July 1979
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...
Robust SOL-20 becomes competitive for the small business user

THE SOL-20 terminal computer is manufactured by Processor Technology Corporation of California and has been around for some three years. In the U.K. it is available from Comart, whose nine distributors include The Byte Shop, which loaned us the review system.

The system is built around an Intel 8080 microprocessor, with up to 64K bytes of user RAM, 1KB of system scratchpad RAM, another 1KB RAM for the display, and 2K bytes of ROM used for what Processor Technology calls a 'personality module', or monitor.

Personality module

The personality module supplied with our SOL was the SOLUS operating system. It allows the use of a bootstrap disc loader and can run SOL as a stand-alone system. Also available are a cassette-based version and a third alternative for user-programmed ROM applications.

The SOL resembles an enlarged keyboard unit, minus the display but provided with wooden side panels — they look not unlike teak. The keyboard is a standard QWERTY layout with a separate numeric pad. Built into the side panels are two carrying handles but the unit is still fairly bulky; it is large enough for a display monitor to stand on and it contains a large power supply and a fan.

Interfaces are provided for video output, dual audio cassettes, an eight-bit parallel I/O port, and an RS-232 serial interface. Both parallel and serial ports are 25-pin D-type sockets, the parallel one male and the serial female. All are located at the rear of the unit, easily accessible and marked clearly.

The back of the cabinet also contains a commendably large on/off switch, the small but clearly adequate fan, a power plug socket — it certainly helped being able to unplug the lead at both ends when moving the SOL — and a socket for the video monitor.

Keyboard

Despite the general air of substance and size of the SOL, the keyboard is a little cramped in its layout. The space bar is not separated but has cursor control keys on either side. The RETURN key is about half the normal size one would expect; it, too, is unfortunately surrounded by keys. It does not protrude enough and it is placed next to the @ key. In the SOLBasic this key has the effect of scratching the line being entered. Hitting it accidentally instead of RETURN happens far too often.

To balance those criticisms there are many good points about the keyboard. For instance, three colours are used to distinguish between the normal alphanumeric keys, the controls, and special keys. The keys to switch on-line/local, upper/lower-case and shift lock each have a small red light which shows when the key is depressed and locked.
(continued from previous page)
This is particularly helpful; so is the provision of a separate upper/lower-case key instead of having to use the more common shift operation.

Easy access
Including upper- and lower-case, the keyboard offers 85 standard characters. By the use of the control key, a further 36 Pet-style graphics characters are available.

The cover of the SOL is easy to remove. You slacken two butterfly nuts at the rear and lift the two dove-tailed sections clear. The S-100 bus and the plug-in printed circuit boards are simple to reach; the 22 internal control switches are within the reach of a not over-long fingernail. These switches determine the mode of operation, allowing changes to baud rate, display of control characters, solid or blinking cursor, and normal or inverse video.

Display
The monitor provided by Byte Shop with our SOL was a Sanyo Super 12 portable monochrome TV. It proved to be a rather cheap attachment to a system which otherwise qualifies as more expensive than most. The connectors benefited frequently from judicious wiggling to find the best quality of display.

The characters are reasonably large, the level of contrast defining the clarity, but they tended to run into each other. The cursor may be selected as solid or blinking, and the inverse video certainly worked, though with the right-hand side of the characters tending to drift back to normal video.

Fourteen lines of 62 characters are allowed on the monitor. Lower-case characters have true descenders and there is a rub-out key to remove characters from the screen. A cover is also supplied to keep dust from the screen.

Manuals
The documentation supplied with the system was extensive and of high quality. The most important item was the Systems Manual. It contains easy-to-follow and well-structured sections covering almost everything the SOL user would require to know about the computer.

There is information on construction, hardware set-up, peripheral connections, wiring diagrams, hardware and software definitions and explanations - even an introductory letter to the (American) SOL users' society. The style is easy to follow and in general the contents are concise and to the point.

The manual we were given for the Basic was the Users' Guide to North Star Basic - SOLBasic is almost exactly the same as North Star Basic. It is sold separately and we are reviewing it separately. SOL is not the only computer which can attach North Star discs but the initial impression is that this is a well-written guide to a disc-based Basic.

### Prices
These prices were quoted by the Byte Shop, which supplied the test system. All prices are exclusive of VAT.

**Hardware**
- SOL with 16KB: £1,785
- SOL with 32KB: £2,060
- SOL with 64KB: £2,010
- 12in. display monitor included in basic price
- North Star mini-floppy drive: £835
- Hyterm 1610 printer: £2,220
- Hyterm 1620 keyboard/printer: £2,400
- Centronics printers: £350 upwards

**Software**
- SOL disc Basic: Included in the basic price
- CP/M disc Basic: £150
- Word Processor: £135
- APL: Not quoted
- Cassette: £35
- Basic 5: £20
- Focal: £25
- ALS-8 (Assembly language): Not quoted

### More systems
A number of cassettes and manuals for FOCAL, Extended Cassette Basic and Basic 5 were provided. We could not attach a cassette recorder - we didn't have the proper leads - but we intend to review them at a later date. A cassette-based assembly language, ALS-8, is also available.

Two further disc-based systems are available - CP/M disc BASIC and a version of APL; we had neither for review but any readers with opinions on them are invited to send us a critique.

A single North Star mini-floppy disc drive and a Diablo printer were also supplied with our system. That occasions further criticisms. The on/off switch on the disc drive is not labelled and caused some confusion when switching-on; and we were unable to deduce how to send something to a printer from a SOLBasic program - the Users' Guide makes no mention of external printing.

### Plus points
Points we liked about the Basic, a 16K version, were:
- string arrays with substrings.
- support for both sequential and random files.
- multiple statement lines.
- string length restricted only by the available memory size.
- a reasonable line editor, based on the use of control keys.
- a line number range up to 65535, with automatic line numbering available along with a simple re-numbering facility.

The Basic is straightforward to use and is definitely helped by the Users' Guide, which takes a humane step-by-step app-
approach to mastering the system, but we have some criticisms:

- there is no PRINT USING statement.
- lack of printer addressing.
- not all errors are notified to the user – using a string variable with a length greater than that defined will cause the disappearance of the extra offending characters.
- Accuracy is limited to eight digits, although the range for a variable is \( \pm 10^6 \).

One pressing criticism of the Basic is that it is fairly slow. A standard simple benchmark, the loop FOR 1=1 TO 1000/ NEXT 1, takes 2.4 seconds; that is about the same as our Tandy TRS-80 and seems on the slow side for a considerably more expensive system.

**Expansion**

A less important and less annoying attribute is the necessity to drop into the operating system to create disc files; you cannot do this from Basic.

The SOL scores well when expansion is considered. Memory may be grown to 64KB – our system had 32KB – and up to four mini-floppy disc drives and two cassette units may be attached. As the system utilises the S-100 bus, there are several compatible devices which can be used. The basic system contains space for five expansion modules.

**Conclusions**

- SOL is well made and seems robust. The quiet back fan keeps it cool and there is much to be said for using standard technology (S-100 bus). There is a wide range of software, both cassette and disc-based. The ‘personality module’ is another plus.

- For an expensive personal computer system – £2,700 plus for the basic 32KB configuration and disc drive – the standard of monitor we tested is rather poor. That could easily be altered, of course.

- More important, the keyboard could certainly benefit from a redesign of the layout.

- Standard basic is easy to use, though we bemoan the lack of PRINT USING and an easy access to the printer. The User Guide we saw is good and in general the standard of the Processor Technology documentation is excellent, both for a reference user and the beginner.

- At the price, the SOL is moving out of the personal computer market and so must be aimed at the small commercial business user. There its price begins to appear reasonably competitive. In this context, being able to have four disc drives on-line is an advantage and while the Byte Shop doesn’t offer 8in. floppies, someone else must do so.

- Even so, the SOL works with dual-density mini-floppies and so can access a minimum of 640,000 bytes of storage.

---

**Practical Computing evaluation**

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<th>Ease of construction (where applicable)</th>
<th>Yes/No</th>
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<td>Ability to add other manufacturers' plug-in memory</td>
<td>✔</td>
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**Ratings**

1 = poor; 2 = fair; 3 = average; 4 = good; 5 = excellent. N/A = not applicable.
Having carefully studied and, it is hoped, understood the requirements of the system being designed, the next step is to decide whether it is worthwhile maintaining a file for each type of information. If so, then we must also decide on the most suitable method of file organisation to use.

In small business systems the two files found most commonly are the product or item file and the customer file. The former will hold all the details of each item stocked or sold – part number, description, price, quantity in stock – and the latter the details of each of the customers or potential customers – address, terms of business.

Other files often will be necessary but all my comments relating to those two can be applied to any file of data.

For an order entry and invoicing system both a product file and a customer file may be needed but, we must not assume automatically that they must exist. A mail order company may have many customers, each one ordering once only with a very low likelihood of repeat business, so in that instance it would be better not to have a customer file but to type-in the customer details with each order.

Besides, it is unlikely that a small, floppy disc-based system could handle the large volume of data required to create such a customer file – a reasonable size of file to consider handling would have a few hundred customer records rather than a few thousand.

Two approaches

Similarly, a business dealing in specialised, custom-designed products may well not justify the creation and maintenance of a product file. Anyway, for the purposes of this article it is assumed that both a customer file and a product file are needed and that, in addition, each transaction will be recorded for subsequent processing to produce accounting information.

On most small computers with floppy disc of one form or another there will be two possible approaches – sequential or direct files. The choice between them usually will be clear since sequential files, as the name implies, can be written to or read from only by starting at the first record on the file and then progressing to the next and so on.

This is obviously useless if we want rapid access to a particular record – even 10 seconds is a long time to wait when you are sitting in front of a computer terminal with fingers poised for the next entry.

If several hundred records have to be read before the correct one is found the delay could be an order of magnitude greater. Our transaction file would fit well on to a sequential file, though; it will be processed by the accounting program only in the same order in which it was written, so there will be no problem in finding records.

Both customer and product files need to be organised so that any record can be found with minimum delay. Direct files allow this and are simple in concept; the problems lie in the ways in which direct files can be used.

Stated simply, a direct file access method requires to be given a record number and will return with the contents of that record. The format of the Basic statement to do this will differ from machine but will probably be of the following form:

```
GET N,R,A$    to read from the file
PUT N,R,A$    to write to the file
```

where N is the file number and R is the record number and the contents of the string variable A$ are either read from or written to the record.

Mike Collier's introduction to computer user in business now

The required record can thus be found given its record number, but this is not a complete solution – the record number still has to be found. The user of the system cannot be expected to know the record number of each part or customer and to enter it each time access to a direct file is required.

As you will have read in last month's article, it is unrealistic to expect the person entering data to know any more than the part number or customer code to which he has always been accustomed. What has to be devised is some way of converting, within the computer, the part number into a record number on the product file and the customer code into a record number on the customer file.

There are several possible approaches to performing this conversion, which to choose depends on the circumstances and the size of the file. For reasonably small files – 200 to 300 records – perhaps the best approach is to maintain a 'key table'. That is a list of the cross-references between the 'key' – the part number or customer code – of each record and the record number at which the associated information is stored.

Key table

The 'key table' can be stored on disc either as a separate file or as part of the main data file to which it refers – see "record types" in the next instalment. If each part number is six characters long and the record number three characters, each key table entry will be nine characters, and 14 pairs can be stored on a 128-byte record. The entire key table for a file of 280 products will thus occupy 20 records. To find any record will require an average of 10 GETs to find the correct key table entry and one more to read the record from the data file. That is almost the maximum number of GETs which can be tolerated, so for larger files another approach has to be found. For small files this approach is simple to use and simple to program and does not require any sorting of the data file or the key table.

Larger files require a more complex method to keep down response times. If sufficient memory is available the key table could be resident (i.e. in memory). It is important, however, that whenever a new record is inserted, the revised key systems analysis for the small business looks at records and files.

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To pay for this efficiency it will be necessary to insert new keys into the table in the correct sequence and re-write any key table records affected by the change – figure 1 illustrates this method.

There is clearly more effort required of the programmer to achieve an efficient technique for reading and writing direct files. In fact, the ultimate extension of the key table approach is sometimes available as proprietary software and is called Indexed Sequential file access – this is the method often used on large computers.

One matter to be resolved is how to
**Fastest method**

The procedure to be described may appear somewhat complex but it can be programmed in only a few lines and is often the fastest method of finding the required record. The first step is to convert the (probably) alphanumeric key into a pure numerical value. There are many ways of doing this and the method described here is not necessarily the best but it works and it is simple.

Each character of the key is taken in turn and its ASCII value found; the total of all these ASCII values is then the numeric value sought.

```
10 I=0
20 FOR J=1 TO L
30 T=T+ASC(MID$(KEY$,(J,1)))
40 NEXT J
50 RETURN
```

This routine will, of course, produce the same value of T for two keys which have the same characters but in a different sequence. To improve matters, line 40 could be changed to:

```
10 T=T+ASC(MID$(KEY$,1,1))
```

thus giving different weightings to each character of the key.

Having derived a numeric value it must be modified if it is to become a valid record number which is equally likely to be any value between 1 and the number of records in the file. The 'equally likely' part is to ensure that the whole file space is used rather than having the first half full and the last half empty, since it will become clear that the efficiency of this technique depends on there being only a small probability of more than one key giving the same record number.

The best way to achieve this is to ensure that the whole file space is used. The RND function will give a random value which can be modified easily to give a random value between 1 and N and, what is more, it does so in a predictable way.

**Repeatability**

Different Basic interpreters have different ways of using the RND function, but most require that it be given a starting value from which to generate its stream of pseudo-random numbers. By using the value of T as obtained for the starting value, the number produced by RND will have the required attributes of being repeatable and of being equally

```
60 GET N,X,A$\lt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\gt\g
THE EXPANDABLE GENERAL-PURPOSE MICROCOMPUTER

RESEARCH MACHINES

THE RESEARCH MACHINES 380Z
A UNIQUE TOOL FOR RESEARCH AND EDUCATION

Microcomputers are extremely good value. The outright purchase price of a 380Z installation with dual mini floppy disk drives, digital I/O and a real-time clock, is about the same as the annual maintenance cost of a typical laboratory minicomputer. It is worth thinking about!

The RESEARCH MACHINES 380Z is an excellent microcomputer for on-line data logging and control. In university departments in general, it is also a very attractive alternative to a central mainframe. Having your own 380Z means an end to fighting the central operating system, immediate feedback of program bugs, no more queuing and a virtually unlimited computing budget. You can program in interactive BASIC or run very large programs using our unique Text Editor with a 380Z FORTRAN Compiler. If you already have a minicomputer, you can use your 380Z with a floppy disk system for data capture.

What about Schools and Colleges? You can purchase a 380Z for your Computer Science or Computer Studies department at about the same cost as a terminal. A 380Z has a performance equal to many minicomputers and is ideal for teaching BASIC and C. For A Level machine language instruction, the 380Z has the best software front panel of any computer. This enables a teacher to single-step through programs and observe the effects on registers and memory, using a single keystroke.

WHAT OTHER FEATURES SET THE 380Z APART?
The 380Z with its professional keyboard is robust, hardwearing equipment that will endure continual handling for years. It has an integral VDU interface—just plug a black and white television into the system in order to provide a display unit—you do not need to buy a separate terminal. The integral VDU interface gives you upper and lower case characters and low resolution graphics. Text and graphics can be mixed anywhere on the screen. The 380Z also has an integral cassette interface, software and hardware, which uses named cassette files for both program and data storage. This means that it is easy to store more than one program per cassette.

Owners of a 380Z microcomputer can upgrade their system to include floppy (standard or mini) disk storage and take full advantage of a unique occurrence in the history of computing—the CP/M industry standard disk operating system. The 380Z uses an 8080 family microprocessor—the Z80—and this has enabled us to use CP/M. This means that the 380Z user has access to a growing body of CP/M base software, supplied from many independent sources.

380Z mini floppy disk systems are available with the drives mounted in the computer case itself, presenting a compact and tidy installation. The FDS-2 standard floppy disk system uses double-sided disk drives, providing 1 Megabyte of on-line storage.

Versions of BASIC are available with the 380Z which automatically provide controlled cassette data files, allow programs to be loaded from paper tape, mark sense card readers or from a mainframe. A disk BASIC is also available with serial and random access to disk files. Most BASICs are available in erasable ROM which will allow for periodic updating.

If you already have a teletype, the 380Z can use this for hard copy or for paper tape input. Alternatively, you can purchase a low cost 380Z compatible printer for under £300, or choose from a range of higher performance printers.

*CP/M® Registered trademark Digital Research.

380Z/16K System with Keyboard £965.00
380Z/56K complete with DUAL FULL FLOPPY DISK SYSTEM FDS-2 £1,266.00
380Z Computer Systems are distributed by RESEARCH MACHINES, P.O. Box 75, Chapel Street, Oxford. Telephone: OXFORD (0865) 49792. Please send for the 380Z Information Leaflet. Prices do not include VAT @ 8% or Carriage

Circle No. 159
PRACTICAL COMPUTING July 1979
PRACTICAL COMPUTING

**Something for everyone**

LAST MONTH we surveyed what you can and cannot expect from word processing on a microcomputer. Part two of our review looks at some of the specific products offered for the micro. Some are off-the-shelf applications packages; some are software systems from the hardware vendor. The price range is from £15 for a Pet cassette to more than £300 for a fully-fledged disc word processor. There must be something here for everyone.

**Apple II: Word Processor**


**Keen Computers**, one of the more active U.K. dealers with the Apple II, is at pains to point out the limitations of this package. For a start, it is intended for writing standard letters — they are typed-in, stored on tape, recalled and amended as required, with new lines and variable information added to personalise them, and then printed.

Commands include insert, delete and change lines; search and replace for specified strings, and line centring. You have to specify approximately how many lines you expect to enter before you start keying, and specific omissions include insert and delete for individual words, left and right justification, and document assembly from standard assembly.

Keen says they will all be featured in a Mark II version which should be available towards the end of the year.

**Commodore Pet: MEDIT**


THIS alternative to the CMC word processor in the Petsoft catalogue also has a very good user manual. The introduction makes no bones about the matter: "MEDIT is a very simple and basic editor, designed to run on an 8K Pet with a single cassette". Editing data requires plenty of time and much juggling of cassettes.

MEDIT leaves about 3K in a small Pet and to allow for merging and inserts your cassette files must be less than 1,500 bytes. You have a total of 18 commands, including those to open and close files. You can read in and store specified members of lines and part of a line, inserting and deleting simply as required. There are no print format facilities and no search and replace functions.

**Commodore Pet: CMC Word Processor**

*Cassette system. Available in the U.K. from Petsoft at £25; also available through Kingston Computers.*

CMC in search text is a software house called Connecticut Micro Computer and though this package saw the light of day only this year it already has acquired a good reputation. For a start it has very good documentation considering it is a low-cost cassette.

You can delete and insert lines, edit within a line, replace one line with another, and move text blocks around. There is no automatic search and replace facility, though Files may be saved and merged; the left margin can be adjusted for indentation but there is no right-justification. Other print directives set the line length and spacing, and centre headings.

CMC wrote the system for an 8K Pet but that leaves space for only 2,000 characters of text — about 100 lines. You will have to print or save one section before starting another. You might find extra memory handy, and a better keyboard is almost essential.

Petsoft has a version for RS232 printers and direct connections to the IEEE port. We are told a floppy disc version is on the way — price about £30.

**Commodore Pet: Word Processor**

*Cassette system. Available from Costed Automation. Price: £125 (plus software support contract at £125).*

THIS is not a load-and-go word processor like most Pet software. Costed says it will have to be "installed" by its own staff, who will also modify print output parameters — such as line length — to suit the printer you have. The price includes training for one person.

Training is essential, because there is no manual for the system. Costed declares that it is "very easy to understand and use" but it "becomes cloudy if on-site training is not given."

The command includes text entry; listing, deletion, inserts and amendment; and saving on to and reading from cassette — there is no disc version. Output formatting commands allow you to define new paragraph, new line, tab positions, and standard parameters for characters per line, line spacing, lines per page, and the position of the left-hand margin. Text can be centred, and indented.

There appears to be no search facility and no right-hand margin functions, like justification and coping with widow lines. The only printers acceptable are those which connect to the Pet IEEE interface.

**Compucorp 600: TEXT/ONE**

*Disc system. Available from Compucorp and its distributors. Price: £1,000.*

THE Compucorp 600 is a family of desktop computers starting at about £4,500. The systems combine screen, keyboard and floppy discs in one unit with a printer separate.

**WORD-MASTER** has some fairly powerful file management facilities, too; automatic back-up and re-start — the original file is preserved; automatic paging and buffering — to manage the transfer of information between disc and memory; copying and saving any or all of specific text files as required; retrieval functions include addition or deletion of characters, words or lines; block movement of paragraphs, pages and other sections of text; and document assembly from standard paragraphs.

The search-and-replace facility is good and there is a useful mailing list capability which is rare on microcomputers — with it you can insert variable information in standard letters automatically, and the system can select exactly which choice of several options will go in as the variable text.

A significant aspect of this system is the use of single keystrokes for WP functions; there are about 60 of them. The Compucorp 600 has a row of special keys on the keyboard, the functions varying according to what you are doing, as in running word processing operations. Compucorp provides a strip of key labels to tell you what the keys mean.

**CP/M systems: WORD-MASTER**


CP/M is a popular operating system now available as standard or an option on many personal computers. Those we know of include Rair Black Box, Exidy Sorcerer, TEI, Cromemco (CDOS is a variant), North Star Horizon, Pertec PCC 2000 and Compeltec Series/1, and the Computer Centre disc systems.

Compeltec, incidentally, sells WORD-MASTER integrated with the MicroPro mailing list system on both its computers (2000 and Series/1) for £250.

MicroPro is the Californian software house which developed WORD-MASTER. It has a full set of edit commands you can move the cursor left or right by one character, which is normal, or by one word, which is most unusual; you can go to the beginning of the line or the screen, and you can move the whole file up or down on the screen. Lines, words and characters can be inserted or deleted left or right.

The command mode is equally impressive; it provides for manipulation of stored text. It gives a good variety of search-and-replace options, including a loop facility, so that after a search failure the program can go for some alternative search parameters.

WORD-MASTER has some fairly powerful file management facilities, too; automatic back-up and re-start — the original file is preserved; automatic paging and buffering — to manage the transfer of information between disc and memory; copying and saving any or all of specific text files as required; retrieval (continued on page 49)

PRACTICAL COMPUTING  July 1979  47
Your computer application is unique. It differs from all others. It is because not all applications are equal that MSI has developed a variety of computer systems.

At the heart of every MSI System is the powerful MSI 6800 Computer, one of the fastest and most versatile available. Depending on the System you select, the MSI 6800 has from 16K to 56K of RAM. Mass memory storage in MSI Systems range from 315K bytes in the System 1 to over 10 megabytes in our most powerful System 12.

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Word processing

(continued from page 47)
and merging of files or parts of files in any sequence.

The only obvious weaknesses are in the
lack of output formatting facilities.

North Star Horizon: AUTOSCRIBE
Disc system. Available from Equinox and
AUTOSCRIBE is from a respected
software house, Microsource. It was
developed originally by a lawyer and its
bias appears to be towards the creation
of documents from a library of standard
paragraphs; we have not seen a users'
manual.

It appears to require a 32K Horizon
system, storing up to 40 documents on
each diskette with an index, and allowing
up to 70 pages per document. Features
listed include automatic formatting of
upper-, lower-, right-hand and left-hand
margins; horizontal and vertical tabbing;
underlining and centring; and, of course,
a powerful search mode and 'append'
facility for document assembly.

Imasi VDP-40: NED
Disc system. Available from Imasi dealers
(see Computing and Data Precision
Equipment responded to our survey). Included
in system price.
The VDP-40 is a 'videocomputer' combi-
nating screen, keyboard, two 345KB
floppy disc drives and microprocessor
(Intel 8080) in one package for a starting
price of £395. We view our cut-off point
of £5,000. Its operating system MDOS is a
derivative of the popular CP/M and
includes a 'context editor' called NED.

It is not a 'true' word processor; as it
stands it lacks any real output formatting
facilities. A context editor works largely
by string searching - you specify the word
or name or other character string you
require - as opposed to a line editor,
where you have to specify a line number.

NED works in one of two modes,
command or video. This editor uses an
imaginary 'character pointer' and in
video mode it is at the same screen
location as the cursor; in command mode
you can move the pointer independently
of the cursor. It is not as complicated as
it sounds; command mode seems to be best
for editing large blocks of text; video
mode is more appropriate for small
amendments.

Either way, the usual range of insert,
delete and erase operations are alter-
 natives for moving through a text file.
String searching and replacement is well
provided for. Less usual facilities include a
'loop' function which repeats a sequence
of edit commands a specified number of
times - probably more useful for editing
programs than text.

Microstar 4S: Flexitex
Floppy disc system. Available from Micro-
MICROSTAR 4S only just gets into our
survey with a 64K business computer
system plus a 64K business computer
Floppy disc system. Available from Micro-

Flexitex includes a 'context editor' called NED.

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Microstar 4S: Flexitex
Floppy disc system. Available from Micro-
MICROSTAR 4S only just gets into our
survey with a 64K business computer
system plus a 64K business computer

(continued on next page)
Tandy TRS-80: Text Editor
NO GREAT claims would be made for this general-purpose text editor, but it has many features found normally only in more expensive programs and it incorporates a 'fix' for the annoying keyboard bounce problem on the TRS-80.
It is fully-compatible with the RS232 printer interface supplied by Small Systems Software, which means it will run on most printer adapters of this type.
There is a simple set of nine commands including clear, delete and insert (characters), print, save and load. No formatting operations are provided.

Tandy TRS-80: WORD I
THIS is a 16K Level II system which we intend to review. It is cheaper than Electric Pencil, the only real alternative. WORD I accepts lines of text interspersed with lines of format control information and formats the text into a displayable document. Commands permit you to set page length and width, skip lines or pages, centre text, column output, title headings. Line spacing and adjusting, right-justification and page numbering are all controlled automatically.

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Tandy TRS-80: WORD III
Disc system. Available from Micro Architect. Price: $39 (Barclaycard/VISA). THIS diskette version of WORD-I offers all the facilities of that package, plus the attractions of floppy disc storage for text (fast access filing). The WORD packages have 20 user commands, most of which concern text formatting on output. You use the normal TRS-80 screen edit functions - like the cursor controls - to alter text.
This system apparently offers no document assembly or search-and-replace facilities. There is no limit, however, to text size. We understand there is an all-singing, all-dancing WORD IV on the stocks.

Zilog microcomputers: ZFORM
Disc system. Available from franchised Zilog dealers. Price: £100. ZFORM is a powerful-looking output formatter which operates on files produced by any of several available text editor programs for the Z-80.
This is a good example of a text formatter. You can specify length and width of pages, margins and headers and footings - including page numbers; tabs, indents and centring are all available; you can set the spacing and specify justified or unjustified text. Among selectable options are ribbon colour change, bold print, underlining and sub- and superscripts.

The Exidy Sorcerer is a completely assembled and tested computer system ready to plug in and use. The standard configuration includes 63 key typewriter-style keyboard and 16 key numeric pad, dual cassette I/O, with remote computer control at 300 and 1200 baud data rates. RS232 port I/O for communication, parallel port for direct Commodore printer attachment. 280 processor, 4K ROM operating system, 8KMicrosoft BASIC in separate plug-in Rom-Pac cartridge, composite video of 64 chars x 30 lines, 128 upper/lower case ASCII character set and a 128 user-defined graphic symbols, up to 32K on-board RAM memory operators manual. BASIC programming manual and cassette/video cables, conversion for 5100 bus expansion unit giving access to the spectrum of exciting and useful peripheral devices, such as Floppy disk drives, voice recognition/synthesizer battery back-up board in case of power failure, additional memory boards, E-PROM cards give you the facility to program and re-program your own ROM memories etc. This is the most useful and flexible system that's now available to the home and business user at such a low price.

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Keen Computers, 5 The Poultry, Nottingham (see Tim Keen)
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<td>985.00</td>
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<td>Additional 16K Ram</td>
<td>100.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Applesoft Rom</td>
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<td>RS232 Card</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disk Drive and Controller</td>
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A practical introduction

THERE ARE too many myths about computers. Too many people hold too many rigid and unsubstantiated beliefs about what computers are, what they can and cannot do, how and why they work. This introduction will change all that. For a start, let us summarise the myths:

- computers can think.
- computers are large.
- computers are bureaucratic.
- computers are expensive.
- most computers are run by government organisations.
- most of the rest are run by large companies.
- computers are electronic brains.
- computers are incomprehensible unless you are some kind of genius.
- computers are best left to someone else.
- computers fail all the time.

They are all fundamentally incorrect. Computers are not necessarily like that, though some people would like you to think so. It's worth looking briefly at how the myths evolved before deciding what is wrong with them.

The whole computer business, like most others, is driven by technological and economic forces. When the components were expensive, not many people could afford computers but for the people who could bear such an outlay, there were considerable benefits of scale, so computers tended to be complicated, expensive and big.

Two reasons

The other main prop of the myth is the need for dedicated acolytes. While computers were complicated, it's true that to understand, organise and manipulate their complexity a bunch of specialised jobs had to be created. The need for computer training and the arrival of computer jargon both served to separate computer people from the rest of us.

Some computers are still big and complicated; they still require specialised staff; they still cost a good deal of money to buy and to run; they still operate at unimaginably fast speeds.

That kind of computer is now in the minority. They are bought for only two reasons - to solve gigantically complex problems or to allow a large number of people to use a little bit of the computer, all at the same time.

Weather forecasting or space exploration are obvious candidates for the first category. The second is called time-sharing and it is an alternative to giving the same number of people a small computer of their own.

A small computer of your own is what Practical Computing is about. That mixture of technology and economics has worked to produce a breed of computer which does not differ in kind from the multi-million-dollar megaliths with their over-qualified minions, their impervious forests of new and mis-spelt words, their general inaccessibility.

What is a computer?

Technology has provided a cheaper and more compact type of computer. The economic factors dictate that more people can afford them, more individuals want them, more businesses need them; so they can be produced and sold fairly cheaply. Computers are becoming accessible.

A computer is a fast, rule-following idiot machine. It is fast because it is electronic and electrons are speedy. It follows rules because that is all a computer does; you can alter its set of rules more or less at will, you can add rules, you can complicate rules. It's an idiot because it simply can't think for itself - not in terms of original, creative thought, anyway. It follows those rules.

That applies to all computers irrespective of their size, shape, colour, capacity, nationality or the uses to which they might be put.

The essential element is that you provide rules for it to follow and that you can change them. All talk of 'rules' is a little abstract, so let's give the business a name - programming.

A program is a set of instructions for the computer to follow. It will try to follow them blindly, typing errors and all. If you change the program, or substitute another, the fast idiot will go through the new instructions as coldly and as logically as before.

Remember this; the freshly-arrived computer is blank, it has no intrinsic purpose until you give it one, and the (continued on next page)
Computers are really a whole series of electronic switches. Like any switches, they can be ON or OFF. There isn’t any other possibility. As it happens, there’s a next way of expressing this ON/OFF business — binary numbering.

Don’t be worried by this but there are many numbering systems other than the one we use, which is called decimal, because it uses 10 digits. The binary system uses only two digits, which for the sake of argument are ‘0’ and ‘1’. If ‘0’ corresponds to ‘off’ and ‘1’ to ‘on’, obviously you have a neat way of representing the internal operations of the computer.

The electronics can decode a string of 0s and 1s as a series of off/on combinations and you have a way of communicating with the electronics. You can tell it that certain types of 0/1 patterns will be program instructions; other binary structures will be information to be processed by programs.

**Suspicious characters**

It is possible to write programs which give instructions for any computer encoded as 0s and 1s. Provided you and the computer both know what the binary sequence means, it is possible to hold any information in this form, even alphabetic characters. It is extremely tedious to communicate with the computer in this way, though, not least because any normal person would have to keep checking on the binary codes for alphabetic characters. You would go out of your mind.

So you give the computer a special manufacturer-supplied program which will convert a more intelligible way of expressing information into the binary digits a computer can use. That way you can give the computer a number or a letter and with a quick piece of internal transformation it can understand what you mean.

Most computers translate characters according to an eight-bit code, a ‘bit’ being a binary digit. An eight-bit code comprises a string of eight digits, each of which can be 0 or 1. That gives a total of 128 possible combinations, enough to give patterns for each letter of the alphabet, each number, and a few punctuation marks and arithmetic symbols, too.

So if you key-in a particular sequence of characters at your computer keyboard, it will decode them into a group of eight-bit codes, and they are the binary sequences that it can understand.

It can hold them in its memory, too. The storage capacity of a computer, the amount of information it can keep in memory, is expressed usually in characters — or bytes. A ‘byte’ is eight bits, so generally one byte is the equivalent of one character.

You will also encounter the cryptic symbol ‘K’. That is shorthand for 1,024 — don’t worry about why K means 1,024, it’s just one of those things. So ‘8K’ means 8 x 1,024 = 8,192 characters.

**Chips that pass in the night**

Electronics these days is about switching streams of electrons (or electricity) and it is only 60 or 70 years old. In early days a kind of switch called a relay was used; they were comparatively slow to operate, though. ‘Slowness’ here means a few thousandths of a second, which sounds fast until you realise that even a simple internal operation looks complicated when you reduce it to a number of switches opening and closing — and for one operation that typically means several thousand, several million switches. They all mount up.

So the advent of vacuum tubes in the 1950s pleased everyone. They operated faster. Transistors followed, a few years later, faster still and more reliable. The major breakthrough of the early 1960s was the integrated circuit, and that’s where we are now.

Even faster and even more reliable, integrated circuits were also considerably cheaper and much more compact. They used the relatively new technology of semiconductor materials to cram an increasingly large number of electronic switches on to a decreasingly small silicon chip.

So you’ve heard of silicon chips? Silicon materials happen to be the best way at present of putting the maximum number of circuits — at least 100, more usually several thousand — on to a really small area of crystalline material.

That, in turn, is encased in a block of plastic with legs; each leg corresponds to and is connected to one of the circuit ends on the chip. The little lot plugs into, or is soldered into, a socket on a printed circuit card, which is sometimes called a plug-in circuit board and abbreviated to the PCB.

Those boards are fibre-glass or plastic rectangles with circuit lines printed on to them. The lines are gold or silver or some
other electrically-conductive metal and they run between the socket holes; put the correct semiconductor packages into the correct holes and the chips can pass electronic signals which mean actual data to each other.

You can’t put all the chips you need on to a single PCB — yet. So the chips on one board have to have some way of communicating with the chips on another. They also have to have some way of getting information to and from the rest of the system, and they need some electrical power to work in the first place. So a PCB has a line of circuit connectors along one or more edges; they are the other end of the circuit lines which connect the socket holes.

**Processor power**

You plug the circuit boards into slots in a kind of metal skeleton frame. This has built-in wires connecting one slot with another, and all slots with the electricity supply and the other parts of the system. The connectors along the edge of the PCB mate with connectors in the frame, so there’s a way of passing signals to and from the PCB via the frame.

A processor isn’t a computer, obviously; it is just one component but it is an important component because it decides exactly what the computer can and cannot do.

A microprocessor is a small processor. That doesn’t do it justice — a microprocessor represents a major technological advance, because on one or two chips the designers have managed to cram all the circuits for which conventional computers have several chips.

There are three important implications of this. Microprocessors are cheap to mass-produce, they are fairly small and, for various technical reasons, they can’t be as powerful or as fast as their upmarket brethren.

You might meet four names among microprocessors. None is a computer, but they are the most widely-used microprocessors which feature in small computers.

- **Intel 8080** — and some family relations like the 8084. Intel made the world’s first microprocessor in 1971, and this is now the most popular micro. It is used, among others, by Processor Technology, the CompelcAj size system, the Heathkit H8 kit computer, the Imsai line, and the Compcolor II.
- **Motorola 6800**. Motorola is probably No 2 in the microprocessor business; like Intel and most of the micro manufacturers, it sells the bulk of its production to industry and other users outside the kind of computing of which we are talking. The best-known 6800-based system in our field is the SWTP computer sold by Computer Workshop.
- **MOS Technology 6502**: This micro bears a passing resemblance to the 6800 and is used widely in so-called personal computers. Among those are the manufacturer’s own Kim-1, the similar Superboard II from Ohio Scientific — other Ohio computers also incorporate it; and above all the Pet, whose maker, Commodore, owns MOS Technology; and the Apple II.
- **Zilog Z-80**: Zilog was set up by some people who left Intel with the aim of building a similar microprocessor — only better. To some extent they succeeded. The Z-80 is well-liked by those who know about such things and is used by the North Star Horizon, Tandy TRS-80, and the Nascom-1, among others.

**Thanks for the memory**

A particular arrangement of particular chips will provide the functions of a processor. The same kind of technology is applied differently to provide other parts of the computer system, including the memory.

There are various ways of storing information — especially programs — for future use. They differ primarily in speed of access. You read information fastest from read-only memory or ROM. It is so-called because you can’t ‘write’ new information on to it.

ROM is physically one or more of those plug-in semiconductor packages. Its contents are usually fixed by the manufacturers and consist generally of frequently-used programs without which your system couldn’t really operate.

Then there is read/write memory, whose contents you can alter. Sometimes it’s called random-access memory, or RAM. This is the main ‘user’ memory of the system, sitting there waiting for you to fill with your own programs or the data on which your programs will operate.

Finally there are various external storage devices, the slowest for the computer to get at but also the cheapest. These are connected usually by cable to the box which houses PCBs of the processor.

The two external storage media you will encounter are tape and disc and the slowest and cheapest versions of each are cassette and floppy disc.

Cassettes as used with computers are much the same as ordinary audio cassettes; on the cheaper computers they are audio cassettes sometimes. Certainly the cassette units are sometimes off-the-shelf portable tape recorders.

Cassettes are obviously a cheap form of storage; you can buy one of those recorders for well below £30, after all, and the cassettes aren’t expensive. They are, however, limited. You can’t read from or write to cassette at the speeds (continued on next page)
(continued from previous page)
possible with disc. More important, cas-
settes store data serially. That means one
piece of data is stored after another and if
you want to reach a particular item you
have to pass over everything which
precedes it on the tape.
You don't have that disadvantage with
floppy discs. They are in two sizes, one
about the diameter of a 45 rpm record
and other around two-thirds of it. They
really are discs, and they really are
floppy, though to give them at least some
rigidity and some protection they arrive
in cardboard envelopes. They have slots
cut in them to expose the disc surface so
that the read/write head can make con-
tact with it.

Faster

Discs are much faster at getting data to
and from the processor. They also allow
what is called 'random' access to data
stored. It isn't really random - it just
recognises the fact that you can tell the
read/write head to move over the disc
before it does any reading or writing.
With audio tape, there is no simple way
of getting to the start of a particular taped
song on cassette. The same applies to
data on a cassette but just as you can
move a record arm over an LP to the
correct point, so the computer can move
the read/write head to the proper point
on a floppy disc. That can be very
important, as we shall see later.
There is one other form of storage
which you might come across - paper
tape. It stores data in a form you can see.
A reel of paper tape contains holes
punched across the tape, there can
usually be up to eight of them corres-
ponding to the eight-bit binary code and
each hole denotes a '1' position in that
code. No hole means a '0'.
Paper tape is very slow to read and
slower still to punch and the special
reader/punch unit which does that
is
expensive; it is also noisy. Still, it's a clear
and simple method of storing data and if
you already have the reader/punch
mechanism, it might be worth consider-
ing.
I/O is input/output and the two are
usually bracketed because the one device
often provides both functions, it's easier
to build it that way.
The visual display unit or VDU is the
classic example. It comprises an input
device (the typewriter-like keyboard) and
an output device (the television-like
screen), but a VDU manufacturer finds it
comfortable to provide one cable for
connection to the processor.
In fact, that cable contains some wires
specific to the input function and some
for output; since the computer knows
which is which, the VDU isn't really a
single device at all. In any case, many of
today's smaller computers make a physi-
cal distinction between a display and the
keyboard.

Alternative

Another I/O device encountered fre-
quently is the keyboard/printer terminal,
an alternative to the VDU but with a
printer instead of a screen. You might
also have a totally separate printer with
no keyboard; you will certainly need one
if you intend to use your computer system
for your business.

There are other more esoteric forms of
I/O. One which appeals particularly to
technology buffs is speech; the computer
recognises what you're saying, and it
What is a personal computer?

You can forget most of what has gone before because today you can buy off-the-shelf a fully-fledged plug-in-and-go computer system which requires you to understand as much about electronics as the buyer of a music centre knows about hi-fi. Frankly, though, in both cases you will have more pleasure from your purchase if you know what's going on inside.

That off-the-shelf buy is what is usually called a personal computer - the emphasis being on the individual user. Though you might buy one for your business, you will also be the principal user. By comparison, larger computers sometimes occupy full-time staff who do nothing but work with the computer but who didn't select it and who didn't sign the cheque.

Let's start at the bottom. The most basic personal computer looks like this:

- **Input**: typewriter-style keyboard.
- **Processor**: totally invisible, probably buried somewhere inside the keyboard on a couple of circuit boards.
- **Storage**: internal memory is probably there, too, on one or two more PCBs. External storage will be a cheap cable-connected keyboard.
- **Output**: a screen, possibly an ordinary portable TV set slightly amended.

The three best-sellers at the bottom end of the personal computer market exemplify different approaches.

- **Commodore Pet**: less than £500. One unit containing keyboard, built-in cassette unit, and screen.
- **Tandy TRS-80**: less than £500. Four separate units - screen, keyboard (incorporates the processor and memory), cassette player, power supply. All computers need a black box to convert mains voltage to the current they use; in most computers this transformer is invisibly inside another unit.
- **Apple II**: less than £1,000. Three separate units - colour TV, keyboard (incorporates processor, memory and power supply), and cassette unit.

As for software, all have an operating system of some kind - typically a ROM chip or two which contain all the low-level binary decoding functions which make things work; you won't need to know anything about it, though. You will also have a programming language called Basic.

It is fairly easy to learn and it's easy to understand. In general, the syntax and vocabulary of a programming language like Basic are simpler to grasp than the rules of a foreign human tongue.

Basic has become popular partly because it was devised from the start as a beginners' language. It had little competition; and the business of translating it into binary digits for the computer - the so-called 'machine code' - didn't require as much space or effort from the computer as other programming languages.

Today you might also hear about PASCAL, a language with similar aspirations but it is only just starting to appear on small computers. The only other serious contender is Cobol, a long-winded language for business use which really scores only when you are already familiar with it, perhaps by using it previously on a big computer.

What can it do?

Peter Ustinov's biography compares TV to telephones. If someone asked you whether you like telephones, you would have to say it depends who is on the line and what they are saying. The same applies to TV and it's also true of computers.

A small computer can do something for everyone. That is an over-simplification, of course, but in practice it can probably do something for you, provided you tell it what to do. If the job you have in mind can somehow be expressed as a series of rules or instructions in the form of a computer program, the computer can do it.

There are two ways of putting in a program. You can key it in yourself, or you can 'load' it from cassette, disc or paper tape, in which case someone else will probably have written the program and sold it to you ready for loading in that form.

So you can put in a program you've written yourself or you can load someone else's. What those programs do is limited only by your imagination - within reason. Here are some examples we've heard of:

- **Games**. It's easy to regard computerised games as trivial and irrelevant. In fact, game-playing obviously can be intellectually and emotionally stimulating as well as merely diverting.
- **Simulations**. There's a cross-over point which illustrates the value of games. Simulating the economy of Sumaria or the starship Enterprise might be games but there's little which is different about planning the future of your company or looking at alternative ways of getting you and the family to Dubrovnik this summer.

A good example is in education, where a history teacher might use the classroom computer to decide 'what if' questions and thus bring historical situations to

(continued on next page)
life. A recent prizewinner in a Practical Computing competition is doing that with a variety of situations, including the Norman Conquest – the pupils take parts, make decisions based on the historical situation, and watch the computer decide what the outcome would be.

- Education. This could be applied equally to geography and science subjects. The computer can also be used with obvious benefit in complicated calculations at school; but most teaching and much school administration could also gain from some automation of the more routine functions.

- Business. The same applies to the administration of business, though the returns are visible and financial. Stock control is an obvious example. A small computer could tell the shopkeeper or a retailer the current stock position at any time on all items, which were selling fast or slowly, which were approaching reorder levels, and how quickly the supplier could deliver. With that amount of information you ought to be able to cut back inventory levels and save money.

You could well do the same for debtors if you have a big sales ledger, and you should certainly look to save time by having the computer produce invoices with VAT analyses as an automatic by-product. It might also produce 'personalised' form letters or quickly-updated price lists if your business involves those.

- Home. There is more rubbish talked about computers in the home than any other area of this subject. True, a computer can run your bath, feed the cat, switch on the TV and change the record but the extra items of hardware you would need could become complicated and expensive. In any case, who needs it? There are, however, some sensible home applications. Playing games and doing household accounts are obvious candidates. If you're writing a novel, the computer might help, too. You'll need some skill to put a microprocessor into a vacuum cleaner but that's a chore worthy of automation. There is also some scope for having the computer control your home while you're away – feeding and watering your houseplants, perhaps, or turning a videorecorder on and off at longer intervals than the VCR manufacturer allows.

- Art. Computer-generated art is not to everyone's taste, but at the very least you can have plenty of innocent fun persuading your computer to produce patterns, poems, animated cartoon-like sequences and even music, though you might need special hardware. Some highly serious work has been produced with the computer, so don't take it too lightly.

What to look for

As with motor cars or hi-fi systems or sorbets, there are no hard and fast rules which do not rely ultimately on personal preference, but here are some points to consider:

- Processor: It doesn't matter whose processor is inside your computer unless you want to get into it with your soldering iron, in which case you shouldn't be reading this.

- Standardisation: Much more important is to consider what you might want to add in the future. Some personal computers follow a standard arrangement of connectors for the slots in their metal frames; so into those slots you can put

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Your first computer

any PCB which obeys the same standard arrangement.

The best-known standard is called S-100. If you think you'll want to add goodies, you might well opt for a computer with the S-100 standard. Don't be too dismayed if your favourite compu-
ter doesn't have it; it reduces choice but it's not a disaster.

The other important standard to ask about is called RS-232, also known as CCITT V24. This refers to external connectors, the means whereby you can attach printers and other peripherals to your computer. Again, RS-232 increases the options and it's probably more important to have it than S-100.

● Read-only memory: ROM is generally a good thing. If you have to load the basic system software into the computer each time you want to use it, you don't have ROM in your computer. Having these functions pre-programmed and ready to go in ROM modules saves time and you won't have any load problems — they happen occasionally. Still, this isn't something for which there is much choice about; either you have it, or you don't have it.

● RAM: Read-write memory is much more important. The pressing question is how much do you need? And there's no easy answer.

Determine how much memory you can have for your programs and data, because most personal computers put some of their basic system software in RAM, whether you like it or not.

Then you might look at what your input takes up. For instance, if you wanted to put in a full A4 page of text you would need almost 4K of memory to store it. A relatively complicated game with many twists and turns, like most of the versions of Star Trek, will need 7K or 8K.

There's a variant on Parkinson's Law here — you almost always use all the memory you have, whatever size it is. Aim for at least 8K and try for 16K if you can afford it; you'll want to run fairly sophisticated programs sooner or later.

● Programs: Go for Basic. All personal computers have a Basic and it has become the lingua franca in which programs are exchanged. Beware, though, variants of the language are not interchangeable, and you can't load a Basic program written for a Pet into a TRS-80 and expect it to work.

If you buy one of the more popular personal computers — Pet, TRS-80, Apple II — you will find there is a good deal of ready-made software on sale in the form of cassettes (£3 to £25) and diskettes (usually £10 to £50).

Check whether your computer uses an operating system called CP/M or a floppy disc drive made by North Star; again, there is plenty of off-the-shelf software available (on floppy disc) for these.

● Keyboards: Unless you have a compu-
ter with a decent keyboard, you can have all kinds of problems trying to type in a program. A good all-purpose keyboard follows the QWERTY typewriter layout.

It has a solid, chunky feel when you depress keys and it has a big, unmissable RETURN key — this you use to tell the computer you have concluded one line of input and want to start the next, so it is used frequently.

Extras on it might include a separate numeric keypad on the right (speeds the entry of numbers) and a CAPS LOCK key in addition to SHIFT LOCK — locking into capitals means only that you can press all the non-alphabetic keys and still get whatever is in the lower-case position.

● Display: Go for a big display if you can. A good-sized display produces more information more quickly and in more alternative shapes and sizes than a printer or a small display. 'Big' in this context means it should be able to show at least 16 lines of 64 characters.

Displays are in three varieties. You ought to obtain the best possible results from a purpose-built visual display unit (VDU). They normally display 24 lines of 80 characters, but they will generally add at least £500 to the cost of the system.

A built-in screen like that on the Pet or Compcolor II might not display so many characters but you will get special graphics symbols and no need for cabling.

The third type is simply a converted TV, the simplest and the cheapest kind of display, though it might not produce the sharpest image.

● Power supply: Translating the mains power into the electricity your computer needs is the job of a chunky component usually called the power supply. In fact, it's a voltage transformer like the one used by a model train or racing car layout.

It is possible to overload the power supply, in which case things get hot and/or frail. So look for really beefy transformers and hefty wiring. Also get some advice about how much you can plug into the system's existing power supply before it needs a hand.

Computers dislike variations in the electric current. This may result in the appearance of wobbly characters on the screen, or data being lost between the processor and cassette or disc, or at worst, some component failing.

Voltage variations are inevitable in mains electricity and if your computer is plugged into the ring main you may compound the problem by having other electrical appliances switching on and off — refrigerators, stereo set-ups, irons, heaters.

Ask someone's advice about voltage regulators. For an average personal compu-
(continued on next page)
Your first computer

(continued from previous page)

cputer you could buy one for £25-£50; it
plugs into your mains socket, and you
plug the computer into it. The regulator
evans out the dips and peaks in the power
supply, and the relay provides a smooth flow
of electricity to your computer.

● Printers: Sooner or later you’ll want a
printer to keep a record of your programs
– you might lose or damage a cassette,
supply cleverly, delivering a smooth flow
plug the computer into it. The regulator
puter you could buy one for £25-£50; it

● s from daisywheel
typewriters (£1,000 or more but rather
high -quality,

their chief virtue is that they operate at


can attach almost any printer; otherwise
your options are more limited.

There are two types of printer. There is
high-quality, typewriter-like printing
from daisywheel typewriters (£1,000 or more but rather
slower). Dot-matrix printing is a techni-
que whereby characters are built up from
dots, and because those printers are
mechanically simpler, the prices are
lower – down to around £300 for a very
small and slow printer which can manage
only 40 characters to a line. In the range
£700 to £1,000 you will get a faster printer
(60 to 120 characters per second) which is
good enough for anything but top-quality
printing.

● Storage: Using cassette tape or floppy
disc for storage gives you a cheap and
easily-expanded alternative to keeping
data and programs in RAM.

The cheapest kind of cassette system
loads at something around 50 bytes per
second, and the fastest rarely exceed 300
bytes per second; it could take several
minutes to transfer a complex program.

If you can afford it, choose floppy discs
– their chief virtue is that they operate at
much higher speeds, taking far less time to
transfer information. This saves on
boredom but it also allows you to make
better and more imaginative use of your
system.

In any case, your computer may well be
doing jobs all the time which involve
looking-up records; you need the speed
disc storage for this.

● Documentation: Personal computers
generally have inadequate user instruc-
tions and reference manuals. These days
the accompanying documentation tends to
be better-produced and some of the
learner-level starter manuals are really
good. Even if you are sure that all the
information is there somewhere, it can
still be very difficult to read via an index
or the contents page. Quantity is no
substitute for quality.

● Users: You should also look for an
active users’ newsletter, perhaps even a
specialised user group. Both are media
for exchanging opinions, advice, notifica-
tions of errors, and potentially useful
programs.

● Supplier: You’ll come across three
kinds of supplier – single-system special-
ists, single-system generalists, and com-
puter stores.

The last category is probably the most
important. The computer store sells
several types of computer, several types
of printers and disc drives, and almost
everything you need for your computing
– paper, discs, tapes, books, magazines,
the lot. Those places should serve as local
social centres for the personal computer
community, repositories of knowledge
and advice and notice-boards for ex-
changes, advice and information – or that
it how should it be. If your local
computer store doesn’t seem like that,
tread warily.

The second group comprises mainly Pet
and Tandy dealers, retailers who
handle other products – typically audio
systems or hobbyist electronics, some-
times other consumer electrical goods –
but who sell only one brand of computer,
normally at rock-bottom prices.

The single-system specialists typically
make their money from knowing a great
deal about the one brand they sell and by
selling you many extras for it, including
perhaps some programs written by them
to your specifications. Some computers
you cannot obtain anywhere else. If you
need a relatively complicated system to
do certain specific tasks, that kind of
supplier is your best bet.

What to buy?

Ensure you know what computers can
and cannot do; then decide more or less
what you want from a computer. The first
decision should be what type of computer
to consider, and there are four categories
to look through:

● Hobby computers: Typically costing
less than £300, they require some techni-
cal knowledge. They are either build-it-
yourself kits – not too difficult to
assemble – or ready-built computers on
a single printed circuit board – with some
memory but not much, and with no
protective casing around it.

They may have a built-in keyboard for
input; they may have a small display for
output. Some have neither, some have
both, one has a keyboard and a tiny
printer on the PCB.

All have connectors to attach cassettes,
printers, or other external devices. Most
have Basic; some have only their own
cryptic programming languages. Examples
of this breed are the Kim-I, Aim-65,
Nascom-1, and Ohio Superboard II.

● Games growing up: Again less than
£300, they are a spin-off from the TV
games you see for a few pounds. The
more complicated allow you to plug in
new cassettes for more games. Since
these so-called games centres are essen-
tially microcomputers with the games
cassettes being programs, you could add
a keyboard and program them yourself.
Some of the games manufacturers now
allow you to do that. It’s already happen-
ing in the States, and there will be similar
products this year in Europe, from
Philips and others.

● Appliance computers: Denotes com-
puters designed to be sold, taken home,
plugged in, and used just like any other
domestic appliance, TV or washing
machine. The Commodore Pet was the
first and the best example. It’s compact,
simple to use, and is in one piece. Against
that, it’s not particularly expandable. The
newer model is more expandable but you
have to add extra external items, like a
printer and floppy disc drives.

A more recent arrival in this genre is the
Compucolor II – more expensive but it
incorporates floppy disc rather than
cassette and it gives you a full colour
display rather than black and white only.
Further up-market there are several plug-
in-and-go computers, so the price spread
is from £500 to more than £5,000. The
more expensive ones are designed for
business use, of course, and they assume
generally that you will be attaching at
least one external device – a printer.

● Building-block computers: They sepa-
rate the I/O, external storage and proces-
sor functions into different boxes and
connect them by cable. The processor
box contains the memory and may
contain floppy disc drives, too, as in
North Star Horizon. The Apple II, Tandy
TRS-80 and Processor Technology Sol
exemplify an alternative design trend by
putting the processor and memory into
the keyboard.

The attraction is simple. To uprate one
area of the system you can disconnect the
existing unit and plug in a better one,
and/or you can attach more of the same,
and/or you can add extras.

So you could swap a slow but cheap
cassette for a fast but expensive floppy
disc when you can afford the difference.

You can attach more memory or a second
disc if you want more storage. You could
plug in a special typewriter-quality print-
er or one of those voice output devices if
you want some extra facilities.
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CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

INTRODUCTION TO THE USE OF MICROPROCESSORS IN LIGHT INDUSTRY.
Thursday, July 5. Chairman: John Coll, Head of Electronics, Oundle School.

KEITH BAKER, UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX: Microprocessors and the Product.

HOWARD KORNSTEIN, INTEL CORPORATION: Future trends in microcomputer technology.

MIKE GURR, BOC: Getting into Micros.

JOHN COLL, OUNDLE SCHOOL: Software simplified.

BARRY STANDRING, INTEXT: Business Information Services.

ALL SPEAKERS: Panel discussion.

PERSONAL COMPUTERS IN BUSINESS
Friday, July 6. Chairman: Keith Baker, Lecturer in Computer Science, University of Sussex.

PORTIA ISAACSON, ELECTRONIC DATA SYSTEMS CORP., U.S.A.: The personal computer, trends and developments.


JOHN COLL, OUNDLE SCHOOL: Teach yourself computers.

CHAIR ED BY KEITH BAKER:
Personal computer parade – description and demonstration of four machines.

ALL SPEAKERS: Personal computer probe – questions on demonstration.

MIKE GURR, BOC: Running your business at home – with micros.

CLIVE LOVELUCK, ULSTER MANAGEMENT CENTRE: Personal computers, a new dimension in management training.

DO-IT-YOURSELF COMPUTERS
Saturday, July 7. Chairman: Mike Gurr, Database Consultant, BOC.

PORTIA ISAACSON: The 'byte' shop explosion.

MIKE GURR, BOC: New techniques in software.

JOHN COLL, OUNDLE SCHOOL: Case study – a personal computer built from scratch.

PORTIA ISAACSON: The games people play.

CHAIR ED BY ADAM OSBORNE, ALL SPEAKERS TAKING PART: Discussion panel.

CONFERENCE INFORMATION

SEMINAR REGISTRATION
You can apply for a registration form by writing to Online Conferences Ltd., Cleveland Road, Uxbridge, Middlesex.

REGISTRATION FEES
Thursday, July 5 – Introduction to the use of Microprocessors in Light Industry. £45 plus £3.60 VAT.

Friday, July 6 – Personal Computers in Business. £45 plus £3.60 VAT.

Both days – £75 plus £6.00 VAT. The fees include daytime refreshments and a light buffet lunch.

REGISTRATION FEES
Saturday, July 7 – The Do-It-Yourself Computer Day. £10. The fee includes coffee and tea, but not lunch.

GENERAL SHOW INFORMATION

HOURS OF EXHIBITION
Thursday, July 5-10am to 6pm
Friday, July 6-10am to 6pm
Saturday, July 7-10am to 6pm

ADMISSION
Entrance to the exhibition is by ticket only. Price £1. On Saturday, the DIY Computer Fair day, children under 14 will be admitted for 50p. A special offer of three tickets for £2 is available on tickets bought in advance. They can be used on any day. Seminar participants will be given a complimentary exhibition ticket which can be used on all three days of the show. Advance tickets available from Online.

CATERING FACILITIES
The exhibition foyer has a bar and there are tea and coffee points in the exhibition where snacks will be available. The Bloomsbury Centre Hotel has full restaurant facilities.

ACCESSIBILITY
The hotel is easy to reach by Underground – Russell Square, Kings Cross/St. Pancras, Euston and Euston Square are within easy walking distance. Bus routes are two minutes' walk away, and the 68, 77, 170, 186, 196 and 239 service the area. The hotel has a basement car park and there is an adjacent National Car Park.

ACCOMMODATION
Online recommends that overnight accommodation be booked through Exp-O-Tel, Strand House, Great West Road. Brentford, Middx. Tel: 01-588 8765.

TELEPHONE FACILITIES
Coin boxes are situated around the hotel.

1979 Microcomputer Show, incorporating the Do-it-Yourself Computer Show, is organised by Online Conferences Ltd., Cleveland Road, Uxbridge, Middlesex. Tel: (0895) 39262. Contact: Christine Clarke.

PRACTICAL COMPUTING July 1979
MICROPROCESSOR HISTORY
IS BEING CREATED
at 184 High Street Berkhamsted
and BOREDOM has been BANISHED

Our Client, part of an International giant, has been so successful in the micro-terminal business, that it needs three more software designers. At least two years' assembler experience in a disciplined environment plus a lively and creative mind is required.

In return, the Company offers the following Five-Star package.

* Really interesting design work covering micro-executives, communications etc.
* Membership of a talented dynamic young team with good promotion prospects.
* Good pay – starting salaries up to £7K
* Big company benefits include good pension scheme, plus relocation assistance if required.
* Attractive working environment, central to shops, facilities etc. – N.B. – there are three fine pubs just across the road.

Find out more by simply phoning:
Lionel Elton of Business Resources, at Redbourn (STD 058 285) 3888 during office hours.
Or at Aylesbury (STD 0296) 630063 during the evening or at the weekend.

Or just write to

Business Resources
Old School, The Common, Redbourn, St. Albans, Herts AL3 7NG

Licensed as an Employment Agency by the D.E. Licence No. SE(A) 3211

DILLON’S UNIVERSITY BOOKSHOP
1 MALET STREET, LONDON WC1A 7JB Tel. 01-636 1577 (16 lines)

As visitors to our stand at the
MICROSYSYEMS '79 Exhibition will
already know, Dillon’s has one of the
most comprehensive stocks of computer
books in the country. We will be
presenting an even larger display at the
MICROCOMPUTER SHOW with, of
course, special emphasis on all aspects
of mini- and microcomputers.

Our Malet Street shop is only a few
minutes’ walk from the Bloomsbury
Centre. There you will find over 150,000
different titles in more than 20 subject
departments. If you cannot visit the
shop, write to the Mail Order Manager
for details of our postal services and
credit facilities, stating your subjects of
interest.

A Pentos Company
LIST OF EXHIBITORS

Abacus Computers Ltd,
62 New Cavendish Street,
London, W1. Tel: 01-580 8841
Stand 3

The Byte Shop
426-428 Cranbrook Road,
Gants Hill,
Ilford, Essex. Tel: 01-554 2177
Stands 18, 19, 20, 25, 26, 27

CCS Microhire,
7 Peartree Dell,
Letchworth, Herts. Tel: (046 26) 73301
Stand 15

Comart,
PO Box 2,
St. Neots, Huntingdon. Tel: (0480) 215005
Stand 34

Commodore Business Systems,
360 Euston Road,
London, NW1. Tel: 01-388 5702
Stand 21

Computabits,
41 Vincent Street,
Yeovil, Somerset. Tel: (0935) 26522
Stand 6

Computer Bookshop,
Temple House,
43-48 New Street,
Birmingham, B2 4LH. Tel: 021-643 4577
Stand 49

Comp Computer Components,
14 Station Road,
Barnet, Herts. Tel: 01-449 6596
Stands 28 and 29

Datalogic Ltd,
29 Marylebone Road,
London, NW1. Tel: 01-306 7289
Stand 45

Dillon's University Bookshop,
1 Malet Street,
London, WC1. Tel: 01-636 1577
Stand 4

Distributed Data Processing,
Essex House,
Cherrydown,
Basildon, Essex. Tel: (0268) 727474/282155
Stand 5

Electrical Research Association,
Cleeve Road,
Leatherhead, Surrey. Tel: (037 23) 74151
Stand 24

Equinox Computer Systems,
Kleeman House,
16 Annning Street,
New Inn Yard,
London, EC2. Tel: 01-739 2387
Stand 32

Euro-Calc Ltd,
56 High Holborn, London, W1. Tel: 01-636 8161
Stands 1 and 2

Gemsoft Ltd,
Alverstone Lodge,
Wych Hill Lane,
Woking, Surrey. Tel: (04862) 60268.
Stand 33

Grama (Winter) Ltd,
21b Dryden Chambers,
119, Oxford Street, London, W1. Tel: 01-636 8210
Stand 48

H B Computers,
22 Newland Street,
Kettering,
Northamptonshire. Tel: (0536) 839922
Stand 51 and 53

H L Audio Newtronics,
138 Kingsland House,
London, E2. Tel: 01-739 1582
Stand 5

H L Audio Newtronics,
28 Collingdon Avenue,
Boxhill-on-Sea,
East Sussex. Tel: (0424) 220391
Stand 55

Keen Computers Ltd,
5 The Poultry,
Nottingham, NG1 2HW. Tel: (0602) 583254
Stand 44

KES Computers,
4 Summerfields,
Yarnfield, Road,
Stone, Staffs. Tel: (0785 77) 297
Stand 54

LP Enterprises,
313, Kingston Road,
Ilford, Essex. Tel: 01553 1001
Stands 12 and 13

Lyme Peripherals,
2 Avenue Court,
Farm Avenue,
London, NW5. Tel: 01-425 0490
Stand 7

Midwich Computer Co. Ltd,
Hillsborough House,
Churchgate Street,
Old Harlow, Essex. Tel: (0279) 25756
Stand 16

MicroFocus Ltd.,
58 Acacia Road,
London, NW8. Tel: 01-722 8843
Stand 22

Microsolve Computer Services
Ltd,
252 Hale Lane,
Edgware, Middx. Tel: 01-958 4347
Stand 10

Nascom Microcomputers,
92 Broad Street,
Chesham, Bucks. Tel: (02405) 75151
Stand 48

Newtons Laboratories,
123 Wandsworth High Street,
London, SW18. Tel: 01-870 4248
Stands 38, 39, 40 and 41

Online Publications,
Cleveland Road,
Uxbridge, Middx. Tel: (0895) 39262
Stand 35

Osborne & Associates,
PO Box 2036,
Berkeley, CA 84702, USA. Stand 50

Personal Computers Ltd,
194-200, Bishopsgate,
London, EC2. Tel: 01-283 3391
Stand 49

Petsoft,
MicroAct Ltd.,
5-6 Vicarage Road,
Edgbaston, Birmingham, Tel: (0635) 201131/200854
Stand 14

Practical Computing,
30-31 Islington Green,
London, N1. Tel: 01-359 8451
Stand 17

Research Machines,
209 Cowley Road, Oxford, Tel: (0865) 49791
Stand 30

Rostronics,
118 Wandsworth High Street,
London, SW18. Tel: 01-660 4805
Stand 31

Sirton Products Ltd,
13 Warwick Road,
Coulsdon, Surrey. Tel: 01-660 5617
Stand 9

Technalogics,
8 Egerton Street,
Liverpool, L8 7LY, Merseyside. Tel: 051-724 2695
Stand 11

PRACTICAL COMPUTING July 1979
What you can see at the Show

Abacus Computers Ltd
62, New Cavendish Street,
Tel: 01-580 8841
Stand 3

Abacus will be exhibiting two machines, the TEI and Com- pucolor. They will run on standard Cobol packages and the Compu color will be hooked to a graphics terminal controlled by the TEI. You will be able to get your hands on the machines and there will be sales and technical staff to take orders and give free advice.

Byte Shop
426-428, Cranbrook Road,
Gants Hill, Ilford, Essex.
Tel: 01-554 2177
Stands 18, 19, 20, 25, 26, 27

The Byte Shop, with more space than anyone else at the show, will be giving most of its range an airing. The equipment on show will include the Cromemco System 3, Processor Technology Sol-20, North Star Horizon, the new Pet and the ITT 2020. There will be continuous demonstrations of the machines by experienced staff.

Two new surprise ranges will be launched - a complete range of Ohio Scientific Superboards with 74MB disk drives, plus a range of equipment based on the Digital Equipment LSI processor.

CCS Microhires
7, Peartree Dell,
Letchworth, Herts.
Tel: (046 26) 73301

Stands 15

The Company will be concentrating on two aspects - sales and hire. It will be exhibiting Pet, Apple II, Exidy Sorcerer and Compu color. You will also have an opportunity to see the machines running on CCS software.

The Japanese microcomputer SORD is expected to make an appearance. Two versions, the 48K and the 128K, will be demonstrating colour graphics, among other things.

Sales and hire transactions will take place, as well as an exchange service, so if you want to take your old computer and swap it for another, this is the stand to visit.

Comart
PO Box 2,
St. Neots, Huntingdon.
Tel: (0480) 215005

Stand 34

Comart will be exhibiting its complete range of Cromemco equipment, along with the Processor Technology Sol and the North Star Horizon. All will be running on standard packages. It also hopes to be showing its Microbox. The stand will be fully-staffed with sales and technical people who will be taking enquiries on sales and passing them to dealers. An abundance of literature on all systems will be available.

Commodore Business Systems
360, Euston Road,
London, NW1 3BL.
Tel: 01-388 5702

Stand 21

COMMODORE will be showing the whole range of Pet microcomputers and peripherals, including all the new equipment. A range of its own software will be running on the equipment and sales and technical staff will be on hand to give demonstrations and answer questions. The Kim 1 will also be exhibited.

Computabits
41, Vincent Street,
Yeovil, Somerset.
Tel: (0935) 26522

Stand 6

THIS stand will display a range of standard Pets and Kim-Is, but instead of the normal peripherals it will be running with a set of related products designed by Computabits. Hopefully, they will include voice input and output and a music synthesiser for the Pet. The Kim-I will be working with many of the special projects featured in Practical Computing over the last few months.

Datalogic Ltd
29, Marylebone Road,
London, NW1.
Tel: 01-486 7288

Stands 45

There is an air of mystery surrounding the Datalogic stand, where a new microcomputer will be unveiled. All we could discover about it is that it is a product of the Datalogic micrologic division and it has been described as a “computer in a briefcase”.

It has been designed for a specific application for a customer who has already ordered 50 of the machines.

Dillon’s University Bookshop
1, Malet Street,
London, WC1E 7JB.
Tel: 01-636 1577

Stand 46

One of London’s leading bookshops, Dillon’s will be exhibiting more than 50 titles relating to microcomputers and microprocessors. The stand will be staffed by “people who know about the books”.

Only one copy of each book will be on display, so Dillon’s will be taking orders only.

COMPUTER BOOKSHOP is a trade distributor of books, literature and training courses, supporting the development of the microelectronics and personal computer industry.

Books on display will concentrate on the four major processors - the 6800, 8080, Z-80 and 6502 and “will fulfill the needs of all sections of hardware users.”

Two new books which will be on display are Programming the 6502 by Rodnay Zaks - recommended by Mike Lake of the Independent Pet Users’ Group - and Programming a Microcomputer 6502 by Caxton Foster. Both titles are applicable to Pet and Apple.

Also on display will be a range of Camelot education books written specifically for use in schools and colleges. A detailed catalogue of all Computer Bookshop titles will be available.

PRACTICAL COMPUTING July 1979
some of them running on the Pet. It also hopes to have two business packages available which it is now hurriedly writing.

It has also developed a sound effects board for games.

Equinox Computer Systems
Kleeman House,
16, Anning Street,
New Inn Yard, London, EC2
Tel: 01-739 2387

Stand 32
EQUINOX will be showing the Equinox 300 multi-user, multitasking, time-sharing microcomputer. It serves a mixture of VDU's and printers, as well as floppy discs, hard discs and industry-standard tape drives.

Systems similar have been installed in several businesses, educational establishments and laboratories. The system has a powerful operating system, including Basic, Lisp, Pascal and Snobol 4, together with a multiple-pass macro-assembler with linking loader and screen-orientated text processor and editor.

Equinox will also be showing the Horizon Z-80A-based system.

Eurocalc Ltd
55, High Holborn,
London, W1
Tel: 01-405 3113/3223

Stand 1 and 2
EURO-CALC, the shop which sells anything with a chip in it, will be exhibiting a new microcomputer which it feels will cause one of the biggest stirs of the show.

The machine is Plessey-made, built exclusively for Euro-Calc and entirely in England. It can be used as a stand-alone unit or as a program development system.

Euro-Calc will also be displaying its usual brands, including Pet, Apple, ITT 2020 and some printers.

Gemsoft Ltd
Alderstone Lodge,
Wych Hill Lane, Woking,
Surrey.
Tel: (04862) 60268

Stand 33
GEMSOFT will be displaying some 70 games for computer and television and you can see the black and white monitor for the 2020 will be on sale at a reduced price, as will the 16K upgrade kit. DDP also hopes to have a colour monitor available.

Electrical Research Association
Cleeve Road,
Leatherhead, Surrey.
Tel: (03723) 74151

Stand 24
ERA is not exhibiting the usual equipment models but is concentrating on the education and training side. On display will be the microprocessor teaching system, the MP Experiment. It was designed originally as a course for ITT in West Germany but ERA has now devised a machine which it will market.

Full and detailed coverage will be given to several experimental and highly-researched projects. Perhaps the most interesting and exciting is that which looks at the problems of Microprocessor versus Man and The Elements.

This fascinating document looks at the effects of weather on microprocessors, its reaction to altitude and, arguably the most exciting of all, the Physical Destruction Analysis.

Various experiments have been made in an abundance of agonising ways, including setting a chip in a plastic encapsulation, boiling it in sulphuric acid to remove the plastic covering, then studying the chip under an electron microscope for faults in all individual sections.

The project also examines the effects of nuclear weapons on microprocessors. For example, it shows what would happen to a microprocessor contained in one of the more sophisticated armoured vehicles during and after attack.

H L Audio Newtronics
138, Kingsland Road,
London, E2
Tel: 01-739 1582

Stand 8
THE MAIN feature will be the Elf II kit. Associated hardware includes the giant board kit, 4K static RAM board, ASCII keyboard, power supplies, modulators, light pen and steel cabinets. Software available includes Tiny Basic on cassette, and Elf-Bug monitor on cassette. Manuals will also be on sale.

Keen Computers Ltd
5, The Poultry
Nottingham
Tel: (0602) 583254

Stand 44
THIS dealer will be displaying various pieces of software which turn the Apple II into a business, educational or home enthusiasts’ machine. The Keen range of software is wide and covers all major commercial uses. Titles include Incomplete Record Accounting, Word Processing and Information Retrieval.

A variety of statistical and mathematical software will also be available, as will the range of memory upgrade kits for the Apple II, ITT 2020 and Tandy TRS-80.

A selection of printer and display terminals suitable for use with the Apple and other micros will be on view, such as the Eledex DP 8000, Centronics 779 and Diabolo 1610. Keen is one of six dealers for the Attaché microcomputer which will be filling the rest of the shelves on the stand.

Kes Computers
4 Summerfields,
Yarnfield, Staffs.
ST15 OHW
Tel: (0785) 77297

Stand 54
KES COMPUTERS will be showing an Ohio Superboard with

(Continued on page 71)

Distributed Data Processing
Essex House,
Cherrydown, Basildon, Essex.
Tel: (0268) 727474/282155

Stand 5
DDP will be promoting its new improved large disc drive. It increases the storage capacity for the ITT 2020 over its market competitor, the Apple II.

H B Computers
22 Newland Street,
Kettering, Northamptonshire.
Tel: (0536) 83922

Stand 55
THE TRS-80 is the main attraction, particularly as the new Level Three will be introduced for the first time.

The new Monitor Three program will make its debut. The Library 100 model will be on show on a demonstration machine.

H L Audio Newtronics
138, Kingsland Road,
London, E2
Tel: 01-739 1582

Stand 8
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Kes Computers
4 Summerfields,
Yarnfield, Staffs.
ST15 ORH
Tel: (0785) 77297

Stand 54
KES COMPUTERS will be showing an Ohio Superboard with

(Continued on page 71)
Buy a System...Not just a "Pretty Box"
The SD System* — From about 97p per hour (40-hour week)

A Total System
SD Systems knows that small businesses do not keep full-time programmers on staff. We also know that individually designed business programs can be expensive on a one-time basis. That is why we offer the SDS-200 and compatible business software.

Complete Software
SD Systems Business Software is a complete system package that includes everything from general ledger, payroll and inventory control to Cash Receipts and Mailing List. Special modifications can be made to fit your specific needs.

Leasing Available
The SDS-200 is available by leasing. This gives the small business the opportunity to select the method of acquisition that best fits their needs.

The SDS-200 TOTAL System features:

System Hardware
The SDS-200 give you features that are not found in systems costing thousands more. State-of-the-Art Engineering, Quality Production and Full Reliability testing make the SDS-200 a dependable, compact and easy to operate data processing system.
- Up to 256K Bytes RAM
- Full Keyboard with Special Accounting Key Pad
- Large 12 in. Video Display Screen
- Full Cursor Control including Addressable Cursor
- Blinking, Underlining, Reverse and Protected Fields
- Uses 8 in. Flexible Diskettes for Permanent Storage 2 Mbyte on-line
- Forward and Reverse Scrolling
- Capable of up to 160 Special Characters
- Expandable with Memory and Peripheral Equipment
- Will Operate as a Remote Batch Processor for Large Systems

System Software
A full range of Business Programs are available from CAP-CPP written in Microcobol. The system will support all normal high level languages including:
- Fortran
- Cobol
- Basic
- CP/M

SDS-200 Expandable
The SDS-200 is designed in a manner to give you expansion capabilities. As your needs change the computer system that you select today should be able to change with you. By the addition of memory and peripheral equipment, the SDS-200 can expand to fit your needs.

U.K. DISTRIBUTOR:
AIRAMCO LTD
Unit A2, 9 Longford Avenue, Kilwinning Ind. Est., Kilwinning, Ayrshire KA13 6EX
(0294) 57755 Telex 779808

Dealer enquiries invited

PRACTICAL COMPUTING July 1979
What you can see at the Show

(Continued from Page 69)

C24P mini-disk and a new packaged single-board computer based on the Ohio 500 board. This is 8K Basic using an RS 232C interface or 20 milliamp loop serial interface - other standards can be met for various terminals.

The Pet User Board Serial Interface will also be on display.

Kes also offers computer systems consultancy to tailor systems for customers.

LP Enterprises
313, Kingston Road,
Ilford, Essex. IG1 1PJ
Tel: 01-553 1001
Stand 12, 13
LP ENTERPRISES will show its range of books and magazines. The company handles subscriptions for American personal computing magazines, as well as holding a large selection of books on nearly all the professional, business and hobbyist computing topics.

Examples include books on introduction to micros, business programs in Basic, the artist and the computer, and introduction to micros, as well as holding a large selection of books on nearly all the professional, business and hobbyist computing topics.

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Examples include books on introduction to micros, business programs in Basic, the artist and the computer, and introduction to micros, as well as holding a large selection of books on nearly all the professional, business and hobbyist computing topics.

Microfocus Ltd
58, Acaica Road,
London, NW8.
Tel: 01-722 8843
Stand 22

THIS software and systems house will be demonstrating its CIS Cobol Compilation System which runs on 8080 and Z-80 processors. The software will be running on the Intel MDS-800 and the Tandberg TDV range of intelligent desk-top terminals.

A new variant of CIS Cobol will be launched at the show.

Microsolvive Computer Services Ltd
125-129, High Street,
Edgware, Middlesex.
HA8 7HF
Tel: 01-951 0218
Stand 10

MICROSOLVE will be showing Apple II with a new printer, the Printerm Model 879, which is one of the new generation of low-cost printers with a speed of 120cps. Software consists of debtors' ledger, invoicing, medical billing and payroll. There is also a school physics and commerce teaching package.

Also being exhibited will be a new computer, the Micro Star 45 with 64K RAM. It is a multi-user, multi-task computer starting at £5,000 and can be used by up to three simultaneous users. It will support a double-sided floppy disc drive with an option for double density.

Among the software it contains is a full word processing package, a purchase and debtors' ledger and stock control. The printer will be the new Qume Sprint 5, a daisy-wheel printer terminal with typewriter quality for word processing.

Midwich Computer Co Ltd
Hillsborough House,
Churchgate Street,
Old Harlow, Essex.
Tel: (0279) 25756
Stand 16

THE Hardware Co changed its name recently to the Midwich Computer Co. The new name is being accompanied by a new range of microcomputers which will be given their first public airing.

The computers are of Italian, design, from SGS-ATES. The modular microcomputers are based on the Z-80 CPU and are aimed at the education market.

The lowest-level machine is the Nenocomputer System. It uses a "calculator-style", hand-held hexadecimal data input display station and a solderless experimental bread-board station with binary data input display for digital experiments.

They are combined to enable the student to design and study complete microcomputer systems using Z-80, PIO, CTC and MOS memory. The computers are provided with training books which take the student through fundamental computer basics to the most complex Z-80 programming.

Nascom Microcomputers
92, Broad Street,
Cheltenham, Bucks.
Tel: (02405) 75151
Stand 48

ACCORDING to Nascom, "one of the most interesting new products of the show will be seen," the Nascom-2, featuring 20K of memory, 8K Microsoft Basic and an "incomparable" 2K monitor.

On show with the Nascom-2 will be the Nascom-1 and all its add-ons, including a memory board and Vero frame. The latter will accept the Nascom-2 as well. Other new products are expected to be available.

Newtowns Laboratories
PO Box 789,
127, Wandsworth High Street,
London, SW18.
Tel: 01-870 4248
Stand 38, 39, 40, 41

THIS FIRM is one of several distributors of the Alpha Micro System, claimed to be the most powerful and versatile micro system available. It supports eight floppy discs, four hard discs or any combination of both. Memory ranges from 64KB to about 1.02 MB.

The system is based on AMOS (Alpha Micro Operating System) which is a multi-user, multi-tasking, time-sharing operating system which includes job priorities and a command language interpreter. Printers and other peripherals will be available from stock.

Online Conferences Ltd
Cleveland Road,
Uxbridge, Middlesex.
Tel: (08995) 39262
Stand 35

ONLINE specialises in the co-ordination of conferences and exhibitions in the fields of information processing and communications technologies. All the events are related directly to practical commercial considerations and many highlight trends in technology which have important social implications.

The Microcomputer Show is an obvious example, as is Viewdata '80. This event is scheduled for next Spring at Wembley Conference Centre and will investigate the use of the television screen as an information access device.

The proceedings of most of the conferences have been published and form the most comprehensive range of books on computer communications and technologies available. Online publications have trebled its sales over the last year and is adding continually to its publications titles.

(Continued on page 72)
When we designed our new small business computers, we meant business.

As basic as that seems, it is unique. Just about every other microcomputer being sold as a small business system today was originally designed as a kit for hobbyists.

Every design decision was made with quality and reliability in mind. The result is dependable performance and a solid appearance for business, professional and scientific applications.

**FIRST SMALL SYSTEM WITH BIG SYSTEM STORAGE**

Many applications handle large quantities of information, so the DB8/2 uses two quad density 5-inch disk drives with our exclusive Dual Density Disk Controller for up to 1.2 megabytes of formatted storage. That's more capacity than two single density 8-inch drives.

If you need more storage, our DB8/4 has two 8-inch drives with up to 2 megabytes capacity, more than any other dual floppy disk system on the market.

**OUR SOFTWARE IS BIG ON BUSINESS**

Dynabyte helps you get down to business immediately. The DB8/2 is the first microcomputer to offer enough storage capacity on 5-inch drives to fully utilize CP/M,* the most widely accepted disk operating system. We also supply and support BASIC, FORTRAN, COBOL and CP/M, with our exclusive Dual Density Disk Controller and CP/M.

**AND THE BIGGEST THING OF ALL**

Customer support. Our support starts at the factory with testing and burn-in programs that assure the entire integrated system is reliable prior to shipment. Our completely modular design allows continuing support in the field. We maintain a bonded inventory of all sub-system modules which means we can deliver replacement sub-assemblies overnight nearly anywhere in the U.K.

Dynabyte built in little things, too. Like a fully-populated 12-slot backplane, switched AC outlets for accessories, an option for European power, quiet whisper fans with long-life metal construction, lighted indicator switches for Power On and Halt, a shielded enclosure to protect disk drives from electro-mechanical interference, and a fully enclosed power supply for operator safety.

Since we didn't cut corners in design, the price/performance ratios of our systems make good business sense.

**THE INSIDE FACTS**

The DB8/2 Computer System includes two 5-inch disk drives either single or double sided for up to 1.2 megabytes of mass storage; a 4MHz Z-80 processing module with one parallel and two serial ports, 32k of RAM, a 12-slot fully-populated backplane; our exclusive Dual Density Disk Controller, and CP/M.

The DB8/1 Computer includes a 4MHz Z-80 processor with one parallel and two serial I/O ports, 32k RAM, and a 12-slot fully-populated backplane.

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For a descriptive brochure and price list, call or write Dynabyte UK/Europe, 25 Park Rd, Scarborough, Yorks, England. Phone: 0723-65559.

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- Visit our Northern Office at 2A Gatley Road,
  Cheadle, Cheshire. Tel: 061-491-2290.
- All mail order to Newbury.

Our new address is Newbear Computing Ltd,
40 Bartholomew Street, Newbury, Berks.
What you can see at the Show

(Continued from page 71)

On display will be more than 60 titles, as well as a range of forward conference literature. One of the worldwide best sellers is Personal Computers in Business and a new title Introduction to Microcomputers is expected to have record sales.

Osborne & Assoc.
PO Box 2036,
Berkeley CA 94702
Tel: 0101-415 548 2805

Stand 50
THIS publishing house and consultancy will have all its titles on show, including An Introduction to Microcomputing, A Program for Logic Design, Assembly Language Programming, and Business Book.

Adam Osborne, who is also playing a major role as a speaker at the seminar, and Georgette Psarias will be present.

Personal Computers Ltd
194/200, Bishopsgate,
London, EC2
Tel: 01-283 3391

Stand 49
PERSONAL COMPUTERS is one of the leading Apple II distributors with 20 dealers throughout the country. The show is the ideal opportunity for it to exhibit its range of Apple hardware and as it runs the Apple software bank, you should have the opportunity to see some interesting programs at work.

Petsoft
56, Vicarage Road,
Edgbaston, Birmingham.
Tel: (0635) 201131/200854

Stand 14
PETSOFT will have a complete program supermarket at the show, comprising the "widest range of software available for microcomputers in the world". Two hundred titles will be there, ranging from accounting at £350 on disc to chicken recipes at £3 on cassette.

Petsoft will be launching a new range of business software, collectively called PET/ACT. The range, Petsoft says, "is the first microcomputer software written by a mainframe team to mainframe standards.

There will be several Pots on the stand, demonstrating various pieces of software.

Practical Computing
30-31, Islington Green,
London, N1.
Tel: 01-359 6451

Stand 17
THE 1979 Microcomputer Show marks the first anniversary of Practical Computing which was launched last year at the Do-it-Yourself Show, immediately selling out that first edition.

The magazine is heavily involved once more with the show, producing the official Showguide which will be distributed from a stand in the hotel foyer, as well as devoting seven pages to it in this, our latest and biggest edition.

Practical Computing will be selling all issues dating from October, 1978, as well as our highly-successful Computer Guides and the invaluable Checklist for Data Processing. You will also have the chance of an introduction to our big sister, WHICH COMPUTER?

We will be taking subscriptions for both magazines and answering questions or solving any problems you may have. Don't miss this opportunity to meet the staff of Britain's number one microcomputer magazine.

Research Machines
PO Box 75,
Chapel Street, Oxford.
Tel: (0865) 49792

Stand 30
RESEARCH MACHINES will be demonstrating its British-built Research Machines 380-Z microcomputer. This general-purpose computer is offered in several versions, ranging from 16K RAM and single- or dual-cassette recorder backing store, to the top of the range with 56K RAM and dual full-size floppy disc drive (one megabyte on-line storage).

New or recent items on display will be a high-resolution graphics/memory add-on board, text processing software in use with the 380-Z and a daisywheel printer, and the new operating system extension, which also allows the use of a conventional VDU with the 380-Z.

Other software demonstrated will include the RML Interactive Text Editor with Immediate Mode Editing, extended Disc Basic, Cobol, Fortran IV, Algol, and Terminal Mode Software. Those interested in Z-80 program development or microprocessor training should ask for a demonstration of the 380-Z software front panel.

Rostronics
118, Wandsworth High Street,
London, SW18
Tel: 01-460 4805

Stand 31
ROSTRONICS, the Wandsworth shop specialising in TRS-80 business systems, promises a crowded stand. The Multiwriter 3, "the ultimate daisywheel", will be demonstrated as part of the Rostronics word processing system. The Multiwriter 3 is bi-directional, with full graphics capability, interchangeable print wheels, foreign language character sets, and is fully programmable.

Rostronics has been buying and testing chips and will be selling its own memory expansion kits.

Another own-brand exhibit will be the Rostronics system desk, which can be tailored for any system.

Available only on the stand will be the first issue of the British TRS-80 newsletter, which is bound to cause a queue.

Also on display will be the Rostronics small business system and appropriate software, as well as many books.

Siron Products Ltd
13, Warwick Road,
Coulsdon, Surrey.
Tel: 01-601 5617

Stand 9
SIRON is a dealer for SD Systems, Jade, Ithaca-Audio and Intergrain, and can obtain boards from many other U.S. manufacturers at competitive prices. It will be exhibiting its range of $100 boards, including three CPU boards and comprising many stock items.

The Sirton Data Preparation Unit will be exhibited for the first time. It is an integral unit with a keyboard, 20 character alphanumeric display and 2K RAM for data storage. The unit is microprocessor-controlled, has a text-editing facility and can transmit and receive data via an RS232 or 20 milliAmp serial data link.

Another new product is the Sirton single-board computer, featuring an on-board 2K RAM, 1 or 2K ROM, serial I/O and 16 data-in and data-out lines. It is designed for dedicated control applications or intelligent interfaces.

Keyboards, VDUs and various disc-oriented packages will also be displayed.

Technologies
8, Egerton Street,
Liverpool. L8 7LY,
Merseyside.
Tel: 051-724 2695

Stand 11
TECHNLOGICS will feature its TECS computer system and demonstrate Teletext reception, its computing facilities, and Prestel. The TECS computer system will be available in kit form as well as ready-built.

Technologies will also be demonstrating pattern and colour bar generators - portable, battery-powered TV units for the amateur and TV service engineer.

It will also be showing a full Prestel editing terminal aimed at the information providers of Prestel.

PRACTICAL COMPUTING July 1979
What prompted you to start Nascom? I was managing director of Nasco at the time and Nascom was given to me as a kind of project. It took off because of the microcomputer revolution. John Marshall and I were very interested in everything that was going on and because Nasco had been distributing semiconductor products for nearly 10 years, we knew what it was about.

What role did Nasco play setting up Nascom? There is a definite division between Nasco and Nascom, though Nasco gave us financial support at the beginning. The Nasco group includes Lynx Electronics and one or two other companies; Nascom Microcomputers is within that structure.

When Nascom was first set up we decimated Nasco and Lynx because I took all the staff I wanted with me. Only recently have we re-staffed them with managers and clerical people. We are now re-structuring Lynx and are about to open a new store in Amersham, which will offer a vast range of products for people who want to build microcomputers.

Two-man design

Who designed the Nascom-1? John Marshall and myself. We wanted to see if we could make a small microcomputer. We had the ideas for the design but couldn't carry them out ourselves. We telephoned several people and did some market research but that wasn't much help as we found that there was really no existing market for the type of product we had in mind.

When we said that it had to be built for less than £200 they said it couldn't be done. Finally we went to Chris Shelton of Shelton Instruments. A top microcomputer engineer, he put our plan into practice. Now, 18 months later, we have the top-selling single-board computer in the U.K.

When was the Nascom-1 launched? Officially, in January, 1978; that makes it one of the oldest microcomputers. We started delivering the following March.

What was the initial response? By the end of the day of the launch we had more than 300 units ordered, and paid for, and we still didn't have a working machine to show anyone. That was followed by around 7,000 letters from people wanting to buy or know more about it.

The Post Office wasn't very pleased at having to sort and deliver that kind of mail in a rural backwater. It took us ages to plough through them but we managed to turn around a lot of the enquiries. When we started, no-one could foresee what a success it would be.

Distributors

How many distributors do you have? We have 12 in the U.K. Some are multiple companies, so there are more retail outlets than that implies. Then there are seven main distributors abroad. In Germany, we have between 15 and 20 retail outlets.

Many of our components are from Nasco and through the semiconductor industry in the U.S. Because of these problems there are no Nascoms for sale in France at the moment. We can never supply enough.

Where is your manufacturing plant? In Chesham. We are looking at a site in the U.S. and two others in the U.K. There are 25 people working there, out of around 50 in the company. We hope to increase the number in our manufacturing facility to between 80 and 100 within the next two years.

How reliable is the machine? Very few of our kits or boards are ever returned to us. We have two repair engineers and that's all we need. They can manage to turn them around within a week.

What do you see as the company aim in the immediate future? We shall end up selling built systems. Everything we sell is in kit form now but our overseas customers want everything built. Because we can't do it at the moment, they are prepared to build their own.

What was the thinking behind the recently-launched Nascom-2? In no way is the Nascom-2 a replacement for the Nascom-1. Over the 18-month period it became obvious that there is a market for the Nascom-1 for the foreseeable future. There is also a large market, however, for an upgrade version which will have more of a computing bias. Many of the additions necessary to the Nascom-1 are integral to the Nascom-2.

Do you have an in-house design team or do you contract that work? By the end of this year we aim to have one of the most complete design teams anyone has to offer in this field. We will not be aiming at an end result - a packaged machine. What we want to do is to produce a board with as much flexibility as possible.

As long as we stay with the standard components, this machine will do anything. Since the first was built in 1977, no component has been changed. There are some very good design houses around and we expect to be among them in the next five years.

Do you do much software development? We do a reasonable amount, mainly in high-level languages and monitors. We get a good deal of material sent to us. We have developed an 8K Basic, Cobol and Pascal - that sort of thing. There are other standard packages which we would buy rather than develop ourselves.

How much have you spent on research and development? So far, we have spent only £150,000 but next year it will be £500,000 or more. It is low at the moment because we have been sending a good deal of work outside the company. We have seven engineers, all specialists in their own right, who design our boards. We are attracting them because we are doing original research. We will have plenty of new things at the end of the year.

Turnover

What is the company turnover this year? The estimated turnover from June, 1978 to June, 1979 is £1.5 million. That's in our first year of trading. We estimate that it will be £5 million next year.

How do you see the company as a whole? I think we are the only British microcomputer company. No-one has any chance of getting close to us. No-one is doing the research we are. We produce microcomputer boards - that's the market we see and we understand it.

We do more than just selling packages. Our competition in Europe is nil but that's all going to change.

How do you see the company's future? We are producing microcomputer boards - that's the market we see for ourselves. We feel that the Nascom-1 is only half our range and that there's a huge market for our complete computer boards.

Obviously, we shall expand very rapidly.
ly. We are already looking for more manufacturing space and we are increasing our product range all the time. By the end of 1979 we hope to have one of the most complete design teams of anyone in this field.

We want to be the country's top microcomputer designer and manufacturer, and the way things are going, that day will not be far away.

Our main overseas distributor is in Sweden, where the Nascom-1 has been accepted well. In fact, more than 70 percent of our output goes to Europe.

How many Nascoms have you sold?

So far we've sold 12,000 units worldwide. Last year we delivered 6,000 and in 1979 we estimate that we will ship 14,000. The problem is that we can't make them fast enough to satisfy all our customers. If we could make 500 a week we could sell them with no difficulty. Shortly we hope to be manufacturing 500 Nascom-1s a month and that inevitably will increase.

Marketing

What is your marketing strategy?

We are badly constricted on the marketing side and we have cut our marketing budget because we do not need to advertise - we have no reason to push our product very heavily. We are swamped with orders, can't get the components fast enough, and we can't produce the machines fast enough.

We are looking for a sales manager but he won't have any selling to do; he will have to explain to people why orders are late being delivered and that we can't possibly appoint more distributors for the time being. Three Far East companies want to take distributorships but there's no way we can do that, either. The saving grace of the Nascom-1 is its good value, which shows itself in expanding purchases.

What are the main market areas for the Nascom-1?

The Nascom-1 was created as an industrial board. In the beginning it wasn't fully socketed for various reasons; now it is, so we can add plenty of PCBs and extra chips. We found then that the biggest market area was the industrial user and the hobbyist.

It began as a hobbyist machine but now we sell most to industry, with the rest of our production split between the hobbyist and educational establishments. It is very popular with schools and we will be selling a case for the boards to comply with school safety regulations.

The biggest market we see for Nascom-1 is definitely a board market and we see a huge market for our complete computer boards. OEMs are already buying them and building their own configurations around them.

Six or seven people are producing end-products based on our machine - not necessarily computer products but something totally different, where the computer has played a vital role in production.

In many cases people have built machines and ask us for 50 boards a month for a specific project on which they are working. Big OEMs order them in their thousands for just one project - we have two customers like that. The Nascom-1 is becoming a standard component for many development systems.

We feel that the market area for it will be in expansion boards which make it more acceptable for people who want to use it as a development system to look at a Z-80-based machine. Soon we shall have graphics and a disc controller, too.

It is a low-cost but powerful system, especially attractive for OEMs who want to interface it to other things.

To what do you attribute the success of the machine?

Nascom success is undoubtedly due to our use of the Z-80 processor. Many suppliers have given us a great deal of help as well, especially Mostek, which supplies our processors.

Parts problem

Why have you had problems supplying the Nascom-1?

One major problem is that you can't get the bits. No-one in the chip manufacturing business realised the sheer volume we were going to use. The industry goes through a four-year cycle of boom and disaster. At the moment, we are coming out of a disaster period, hence the lack of parts.

The determining factor of the cycle is the U.S. markets. Forget the Japanese. The Americans assess their cost production and work schedules on their home market; the overseas market is just an extra to them.

If the home market expands, they forget the outside business and we go short of parts. We try to buy as much of the product as we can in the U.S., but we have to get our high-technology parts from the U.S. because they are not made in this country.

(contd. on page 79)
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The long-awaited Nascom-2 was launched in April and has emerged, not as a replacement for the Nascom-1, but as an upgrade version which will have more of a computing bias.

It is based on the Z-80A processor – theoretically twice as fast as the Z-80 – with an 8-bit CPU. The hardware consists of a 12in. x 8in. card with all bus lines fully buffered to the Nasbus specification. There is 20K of on-board addressable memory which is made up of 2K Monitor, 1K video RAM, 1K work space/user RAM, 8K Microsoft Basic and 8K static RAM.

It has a new expanded keyboard built specially for Nascom, which uses standard Nascom monitor-controlled decoding.

The new machine uses 8K Basic which offers a high degree of compatibility with other system- and programs published in magazines and books should run under Nascom 8K Basic with little or no modification. The language will also run on the Nascom-1.

One of the most exciting features of the Nascom-2 is its ability to run with a completely new monitor which has been designed specially for it.

Called Nas-sys I, it incorporates all the features of the Nasbug 2K monitor with many additional functions. It uses a blinking, non-destructive cursor, with on-screen editing. The method of calling routines has been modified and rationalised so that users need only a two-byte RST operation.

It was designed originally to run with the new keyboard but can be used with the Nascom-1 keyboard by using combinations of keys.

ASCII terminals are fully-supported via the serial interface and users can add their own I/O drivers via the Nas-sys I/O driver table to support other devices. Forty-two user-accessible RST operations are provided.

The Nascom-2 will cost £295 plus VAT and deliveries will start this month. Two OEMs have already placed orders for the machines and Nascom says "We will satisfy the demands of the U.K. market first."
Historical simulation

AT FIRST SIGHT it might seem far-fetched to use the computer to assist in historical simulations in the classroom of a comprehensive school but I have been brooding on the variety of ideas involved over a period of at least 10 years.

During my own sojourn in a VIth form I became interested in the links between the disciplines. A scholarship to Massachusetts gave me the chance to learn Basic and an introduction to Probability and Decision Theory.

Richard Ennals writes about the ideas which won top prize in the schools section of our Christmas competition. The entry was from the history and computer studies departments of Swayne School, Rayleigh, Essex. Ennals is developing some of his history simulations on the Research Machines 380-Z he won.

Later, at Cambridge, I spent a year immersed in the linguistic philosophy of Wittgenstein, especially his theories of games and languages. My studies included mathematical logic before I switched to a history degree.

While a student, I wrote and produced a number of plays on historical situations, all starting from the basis of simulation and role-play. Teacher training followed and on teaching practice in Southfields, I developed my first simulation 'kit', based on the United Nations Organisation and how its members handle a series of possible crises.

Based on briefing

My first teaching post, in Mitcham, was in a department whose head, John Waddleton, had considerable skill and experience in simulations; this produced further kits on the House of Commons and the workings of a factory.

No computer facilities were available for these; the simulations were based on the briefing of the individuals, and the free development of the situation by the group in their roles.

Last September, in my present post as head of the history department at Swayne School, I found an ideal opportunity to develop my ideas further. My colleague, Martin Frampton, shared my interest in games, and I developed a range of new

HOW THE IDEAS WORK

Our use of the computer for history simulations on a set of principles from the classroom teaching situation:

- The logical structure of a computer analogue of a historical situation is similar to the equivalent classroom simulation, with the possible difference that the simulation game normally involves decisions by a number of participants rather than by a single player. So it should be feasible to make use of the computer analogue to enhance the classroom simulation, and vice versa.
- If the appropriate programming and role preparation are provided in advance, the input of data and classroom role-play can be carried out without over-direction from the teacher.
- The computer can aid the simulation participants in carrying out historically credible decisions, given the accuracy of information already stored.
- There is philosophically a clear link between mathematical and computer logic, language structure and the rules of games — as outlined, for instance in Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations and Braithwaite's Theory of Games as a tool for the Moral Philosopher. This has clear, if undeveloped, practical implications, especially for people like teachers who have the task of explaining complex processes.
- The computer should not be used simply for its own sake of doing so, and it should not perform functions already carried out adequately by other means. It should help clarify the decision processes involved and enhance the learning experience of the class. It should enable the participants to be aware of the interrelation of two or more variables, and the consequences of their combination — hard to convey by conventional means.
- The computer work involved in class should not be too complex, with easily-understood input data and comprehensible conclusions printed out or displayed on a screen.

PRACTICAL COMPUTING July 1979
kits based on the Russian Revolution, the Age of Discovery, the Wedgwood firm in the Industrial Revolution, the Norman Conquest, and the League of Nations—all for mixed-ability classes.

Next to my classroom at Swayne is the computer studies room, run by John Ward. I showed him a range of programs I had devised for use in the games; he detailed three able ‘O’ level students—Andrew Wood, Martin Attwood and Keith Stewart—to help me as part of their computer studies course-work. They came to history lessons where the games were being used, and devised programs to facilitate the simulation process and enhance the students’ understanding.

In an evening

Then Ward spotted the competition run by Practical Computing. The initial entry was written in an evening but a good deal of hard work was put in by all five of the team in developing the ideas, flowcharts and programs for the final submission, which ran to about 40 pages of typescript.

We have had to work so far with strictly limited access to a time-sharing terminal on-line to the county computer centre but our students have enthusiasm to start work at 7.30 each morning.

Helpful to all

The prize of a Research Machines 380-Z should expand our ability enormously to produce innovative materials for use with our classes, and in other schools. Essex County Council has been encouraging computer education for some years and recommends the 380-Z. It is helping us to modify our rooms to gain the most advantage from this new acquisition for our two departments.

Use of a television screen should enable a whole class, rather than just one individual, to benefit from the output of the computer; and the aim in our historical work is for the computer to become a major classroom teaching aid. Practical Computing and Research Machines have given us a chance to show how this can be done.

**PUTTING THE PRINCIPLES INTO PRACTICE**

Some examples of how the computer can be of use, based on classroom experience with simulation materials devised at Swayne School.

- **Wedgwood Potteries**
  We use a simulation kit for third-year, mixed-ability secondary students based on Josiah Wedgwood and his pottery firm in the 18th century. Class members are allotted a separate role among the people connected with the Wedgwood Pottery. Each receives a historical briefing on an individual part so that decisions will be historically authentic. A range of Basic programs has been developed to aid the management in planning of wages, prices and research policy. Data input is straightforward, and the printed conclusions go beyond the complexity of reasoning and the calculation of which the students are capable. Participants react to the computer findings, and the game continues. This relies, in part, on simple economic theory and, in part, on the provision of historically-accurate background material.

- **Explorers**
  Second-year, mixed-ability history students have been using a simulation kit based on the Voyages of Discovery in the 15th and 16th centuries; the results have been very encouraging in terms of historical authenticity, the quality of written work and the level of enthusiastic participation. A fifth-year student, Andrew Wood, has written a program which clarifies the process of trading and makes possible many of the authentic variations in commodities and prices. Further programs will clarify the choices between routes, and their consequences, and enable the ‘explorers’ better to plan their strategies in the light of detailed historical knowledge.

- **Russian Revolution**
  Two fifth-year students, Keith Stewart and Martin Attwood, have devised a program based on decision theory to analyse the choices facing a Russian revolutionary in 1917. This will enhance the effectiveness of our existing fourth-year simulation kit for the Revolution. As with the other kits, each member of the class is allotted a different role through whose eyes they see the events of 1917 as they unfold. Properly used, the computer can enhance the authenticity of the simulation and throw the decision involved into sharper focus, so that a complex historical situation can be brought to life in the classroom.
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Man Eater

Cassette for Commodore Pet only. Available from Games Workshop, 1 Daling Road, Hammersmith, London W6 0DJ Tel: 01-741 3445 Price: £4.

HAVING seen some of the other offerings from Games Workshop, I found this a little disappointing. The idea behind the game is reasonable and the method of playing looks to be well-designed but the layout of the board ruins what might have been a good game.

The aim is to surround a shark with a set of swimmers so that it cannot move and eat a swimmer. As the shark can eat only diagonally and move orthogonally - up, down, right or left - this seems easy. The problem is that the shark is visible only at the beginning and when it has just eaten a swimmer. Any two men can be moved in one turn by using the grid reference system on the board.

Crammed

It is there that the main criticism applies. The board is crammed into the top lefthand corner of the screen and is much too small for comfort. I found it hard to square to decide exactly where my swimmer was and where I was moving him. As the rest of the board was used only to display prompts and error messages, I found this rather irritating. Even more annoying was the fact that if you entered a move and pressed "return" the "return" not being needed - it moved your man and then displayed "Coordinate not on the board".

I feel this game could be good but it would take a major re-think of the layout and more careful programming.—K.F.

File Handling

Cassette for Tandy TRS-80. Manufactured by Circle Enterprises Inc., Box 546, Groton, CT 06340.

THIS PROGRAM is very easy to operate and spells out everything for you, taking only minutes to learn. Perhaps its simplicity is its greatest drawback because despite its name, it is little more than a telephone book.

It has the capacity for 100 entries per file and the information you can put on each file is name, address, telephone number and birthday. We found that the last item was in most cases unnecessary but could be useful for, say, a small insurance firm.

The program begins by giving a menu of five options - input data, list names in file, search/edit, record on cassette and exit from program. You punch the corresponding number to each of these functions, from 0-4.

The input data allows you to create files; listing names in the file gives the subjects in alphabetical order with telephone numbers; the search/edit facility gives several options. You can select the next or previous name in the file to the one you may already have chosen, search for the file by pressing the first letter or two of the surname.

Easy editing

Editing is easy. All you do is select the relevant file and take the line number to be edited, type in the whole line at the top of the screen with the correction, press the enter key, and all is done. Finally, by using the delete function you can erase anyone from your file completely.

It is unfortunate that the program will not identify a file by anything other than the surname of the person. If you forgot the name probably you would have to run through more than 50 entries to find it.

The program is very fast for putting a different format on to the screen and response times are a point in its favour. Sorting the names automatically into alphabetical order is another plus for the program.

A handy piece of software if you want to record names and telephone numbers but not much use if you want a file with a great deal of detail on it.—K.F.

Space Fighter


YET another program to take you into the outer galactic regions, this time as a space fighter pilot. You meet five enemy ships - after about half an hour's play the game quickly loses its appeal. If a little more of the competition element had been included with say, a clock or faster-moving ships, it would have been more enjoyable.—K.F.

Android Nim


ANDROID NIM is based on all the other Nim games but with a difference - this one has sound and excellently produced graphic robots.

All you need to do to receive the sound is plug-in the cord which goes to the AUX of your cassette recorder into any audio amplifier and you will hear the robots shrieking when they are about to be eliminated, and also the sound of the laser which takes them off the screen.

The idea is to remove the last Android, excluding the controllers which appear at the left of the screen. There is one for each of the three rows of Androids to be eliminated. All you have to do is press the number of the row - the top row is one - and then the number of Androids you wish to eliminate.

Reminder

You have the choice of whether to start or allow the computer to start and your turn is indicated by a flashing display and sound. If you wait 45 seconds without making a move, you will be reminded in the same fashion that it is your turn.

The graphics were truly excellent on this tape but the response time was agonisingly slow. Once you had keyed-in your move all the Androids would move their heads one by one to look at the poor victim who was about to be zapped. This took a long time and was very infuriating.

The worst thing about the program is that we couldn't win. Time and again we tried, even following the pattern of the computer during its last game, but it was impossible.

If you have two hours to spare and you manage to beat the Android executioners, let us know - we would like to know how it's done.—K.F.

PRACTICAL COMPUTING July 1979
If you buy the wrong personal computer, you can’t re-program your bank account!

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WE CONTINUE our series of articles on how to program in Basic, probably the most widely-used programming language for small computers. For the series, we have obtained the serialisation rights for one of the best books on the subject, *Illustrating Basic* by Donald Alcock.

Each month, we are publishing a part of the book, so by the end of the series you will have the complete book. It is written with a distinct informality and has a rather unusual presentation; but it is this style, we believe, which makes it one of the most easy-to-read tutorials.

ILLUSTRATING BASIC PAGE 102

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ILLUSTRATING BASIC PAGE 103

THE TABLE IS PART OF THE COMPUTER PROGRAM AND PREPARED AS
SHOWN BELOW. TO SAVE SPACE EACH ELEMENT OF A( ) IS MADE TO
CONTAIN BOTH THE NUMBER TO BE ADDED AND THE NUMBER OF THE
NEW STATE, THUS 58.07 BECOMES 100 + 07 = 507. THE
ENTRIES SAYING "ERROR" ARE ENTERED AS -1.

10 REM DECODE ROMAN NUMERALS
20 DIM A(11, 7), C(7)
30 REM EACH ELEMENT = 100 + ADD + NEWSTATE
100 REM M, D, C, L, X, V, I
110 DATA 100002, 500003, 100009, 500005, 100010, 500007, 111
120 DATA 100009, 500003, 100009, 500005, 100010, 500007, 111
130 DATA -1, -1, 100009, 500005, 100010, 500007, 111
140 DATA -1, -1, -1, -1, 100006, 500007, 111
150 DATA -1, -1, -1, -1, -1, -1, -1, 100008, 111
160 DATA -1, -1, -1, -1, -1, -1, -1, -1, 108
170 DATA 80005, 300005, 100004, 500006, 100010, 500008, 111
180 DATA -1, -1, 8007, 30007, 100006, 500008, 111
190 DATA -1, -1, -1, -1, -1, 800, 500, 108
200 REM
210 REM
220 MAT READ A(11, 7)
230 DATA "M", "D", "C", "L", "X", "V", "I"
240 DATA "M", "D", "C", "L", "X", "V", "I"
250 READ C(1), C(2), C(3), C(4), C(5), C(6), C(7)
260 REM

THE TEXTUAL ARRAY C( ) IS NOW LIKE THIS:

C(1) C(2) C(3) C(4) C(5) C(6) C(7)

IDEALLY WE SHOULD NOW "INPUT" A SIMPLE TEXT LIKE "MCDXCI"
AND EXTRACT ITS LETTERS ONE BY ONE FOR MATCHING IN ARRAY
C( ). UNFORTUNATELY BASICS CANT AGREE HOW TO DO IT.

SUPOSE YOU HAD THIS TEXT:

LET PS = "FRUSTRATION"

HERE ARE JUST SOME WAYS TO DO IT:

LET A$ = SUBSTR(PS, 6, 4)
LET A$ = PS(6, 8)
LET A$ = STR$(PS(6, 8)
LET A$ = MID$(PS(6, 8)
LET A$ = EXT$(PS(6, 8)
LET A$ = PS(6, 8)
LET A$ = SUB$(PS(6, 8)

SO WE SHALL BE CONTENT TO "INPUT" LETTERS ONE BY ONE SEE OVERLEAF.
A PROGRAM TO CONVERT ROMAN TO MORE FAMILIAR NUMBERS.

ASSUME ALL VALID ROMAN NUMBERS ARE COMPOSED OF THE FOLLOWING ELEMENTS NEVER MORE THAN ONE FROM EACH
CONSECUTIVE BOX:

- C: 100
- D: 500
- M: 1000
- X: 10
- L: 50
- V: 1
- I: 1
- O: 0

THE LOGIC OF THE PROGRAM IS CONTAINED IN THE FOLLOWING
SYMBOL-STATE TABLE:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SYMBOL</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>L</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>V</th>
<th>I</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>100003</td>
<td>500003</td>
<td>100009</td>
<td>10 &amp; 10</td>
<td>5 &amp; 07</td>
<td>1 &amp; 11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02</td>
<td>500003</td>
<td>100009</td>
<td>10 &amp; 10</td>
<td>5 &amp; 07</td>
<td>1 &amp; 11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03</td>
<td>500003</td>
<td>100009</td>
<td>10 &amp; 10</td>
<td>5 &amp; 07</td>
<td>1 &amp; 11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04</td>
<td>500003</td>
<td>100009</td>
<td>10 &amp; 10</td>
<td>5 &amp; 07</td>
<td>1 &amp; 11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05</td>
<td>500003</td>
<td>100009</td>
<td>10 &amp; 10</td>
<td>5 &amp; 07</td>
<td>1 &amp; 11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06</td>
<td>500003</td>
<td>100009</td>
<td>10 &amp; 10</td>
<td>5 &amp; 07</td>
<td>1 &amp; 11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>07</td>
<td>500003</td>
<td>100009</td>
<td>10 &amp; 10</td>
<td>5 &amp; 07</td>
<td>1 &amp; 11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>08</td>
<td>500003</td>
<td>100009</td>
<td>10 &amp; 10</td>
<td>5 &amp; 07</td>
<td>1 &amp; 11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09</td>
<td>500003</td>
<td>100009</td>
<td>10 &amp; 10</td>
<td>5 &amp; 07</td>
<td>1 &amp; 11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>500003</td>
<td>100009</td>
<td>10 &amp; 10</td>
<td>5 &amp; 07</td>
<td>1 &amp; 11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>500003</td>
<td>100009</td>
<td>10 &amp; 10</td>
<td>5 &amp; 07</td>
<td>1 &amp; 11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>500003</td>
<td>100009</td>
<td>10 &amp; 10</td>
<td>5 &amp; 07</td>
<td>1 &amp; 11</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>500003</td>
<td>100009</td>
<td>10 &amp; 10</td>
<td>5 &amp; 07</td>
<td>1 &amp; 11</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>500003</td>
<td>100009</td>
<td>10 &amp; 10</td>
<td>5 &amp; 07</td>
<td>1 &amp; 11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>500003</td>
<td>100009</td>
<td>10 &amp; 10</td>
<td>5 &amp; 07</td>
<td>1 &amp; 11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>500003</td>
<td>100009</td>
<td>10 &amp; 10</td>
<td>5 &amp; 07</td>
<td>1 &amp; 11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>500003</td>
<td>100009</td>
<td>10 &amp; 10</td>
<td>5 &amp; 07</td>
<td>1 &amp; 11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>500003</td>
<td>100009</td>
<td>10 &amp; 10</td>
<td>5 &amp; 07</td>
<td>1 &amp; 11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>500003</td>
<td>100009</td>
<td>10 &amp; 10</td>
<td>5 &amp; 07</td>
<td>1 &amp; 11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>500003</td>
<td>100009</td>
<td>10 &amp; 10</td>
<td>5 &amp; 07</td>
<td>1 &amp; 11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

THE NUMBER TO BE ADDED AND THE NUMBER OF THE NEW STATE
SO ADDED TO ZERO & MOVE THE ARROW TO STATE 11.

IDEALLY WE SHOULD NOW "INPUT" A SINGLE TEXT LIKE "MCDXCII"
AND EXTRACT ITS LETTERS ONE BY ONE FOR MATCHING IN ARRAY.

THE TEXTUAL ARRAY C(7) IS NOW LIKE THIS:

C(1), C(2), C(3), C(4), C(5), C(6), C(7)

AND EXTRACT ITS LETTERS ONE BY ONE FOR MATCHING IN ARRAY.

THE TABLE IS PART OF THE COMPUTER PROGRAM AND PREPARED AS
SHOWED BELOW TO SAVE SPACE EACH ELEMENT OF A(I) IS MADE TO
CONTAIN BOTH THE NUMBER TO BE ADDED AND THE NUMBER OF THE
NEW STATE. THIS 5 & 07 BECOMES 100 * 5 + 07 = 507. THE
ENTRIES SAYING "ERROR" ARE ENTERED AS -1.

10 REM DECIDE ROMAN NUMERALS
20 DIM A(11, 7), C(7)
30 REM EACH ELEMENT = 100 * ADDITION + NEWSTATE
100 REM M, D, C, L, X, V, I
110 DATA 100002, 500003, 100009, 500005, 10010, 507, 111
120 DATA 100002, 500003, 100009, 500005, 10010, 507, 111
130 DATA -1, -1, -1, -1, -1, -1, -1
140 DATA -1, -1, -1, -1, -1, -1, -1
150 DATA -1, -1, -1, -1, -1, -1, -1
160 DATA -1, -1, -1, -1, -1, -1, -1
170 DATA -1, -1, -1, -1, -1, -1, -1
180 DATA -1, -1, -1, -1, -1, -1, -1
190 DATA 100005, 300005, 100004, 500006, 10010, 508, 111
200 DATA -1, -1, -1, -1, -1, -1, -1
210 DATA -1, -1, -1, -1, -1, -1, -1
220 REM
230 MAT READ A(11, 7)
240 DATA M, D, C, L, X, V, I
250 READ C(1), C(2), C(3), C(4), C(5), C(6), C(7)
260 REM

N U T U N E D B A S I C S C A N T A G R E E HO W TO D O IT.
S U P P O S E Y O U H A D T H I S T E X T:
L E T P S = "F R U S T R A T I O N"
I N W I N T E R T U T U P R A T O A $  
H E R E A R E J U S T S O M E W A Y S T O D O I T:  
L E T A$ = S U B S T R ( P S , 6 , 3 )
L E T A$ = P S ( 6 , 3 )
L E T A$ = S T R ( P S , 6 , 3 )
L E T A$ = M I D ( A $ , 3 , 3 )
L E T A$ = E X T R ( P S , 6 , 3 )
L E T A$ = P S ( 6 , 3 )
L E T A$ = S U B S ( P S , 6 , 3 )


ILLUSTRATING BASIC PAGE 103
HERE IS THE MAIN BODY OF THE PROGRAM FOR DECODING ROMAN NUMERALS:

```
300 REM MAIN PROGRAM STARTS
310 PRINT "TYPE ROMAN NUMBERS LETTER BY LETTER"
320 PRINT "END NUMBERS WITH * END RUN WITH **"
330 PRINT "NUMBERS ENDING IV & IX NEED NO *"
340 PRINT
350 PRINT "START"
360 LET R = 1
370 LET M = 0
380 LET C = 0
390 LET P = 0
400 REM COUNT OCCURRENCES OF EACH SYMBOL, LET'S CALL IT C
410 INPUT T$
420 IF T$ = "**" THEN 610
430 IF T$ = "*" THEN 580
440 FOR K = 1 TO 7
450 IF T$ = CS(K) THEN 480
460 NEXT K
470 PRINT "CRAZY ROMAN NUMBER"
480 GO TO 340
490 IF X < 0 THEN 460
500 REM ENSURE ONLY 3 OCCURRENCES OF ANY LETTER
510 LET C = (1 - ABS(SGN(X - P))) * (1 + C)
520 IF C = 2 THEN 460
530 LET P = K
540 REM ACCUMULATE RESULT IN M; CHANGE STATE R
550 LET M = M + INT(X/100)
560 LET R = X - 100 * INT(X/100)
570 IF R <> 0 THEN 400
580 REM PRINT THE RESULT
590 PRINT M
600 GO TO 340
610 END
```

IN THIS EXAMPLE THE FIRST PART OF EACH ELEMENT OF THE SYMBOL-STATE TABLE IS SIMPLY A NUMBER TO BE ADDED INTO VARIABLE "M". IN MORE SERIOUS APPLICATIONS THIS WOULD BE THE LINE NUMBER OF A SUBROUTINE. AFTER PICKING UP AN ELEMENT AS AT LINE 410, THERE WOULD BE AN "ON" INSTRUCTION CAUSING A JUMP TO THE PARTICULAR SUBROUTINE SELECTED BY THAT ELEMENT. AFTER RETURNING FROM THE SUBROUTINE THERE WOULD BE AN INSTRUCTION CAUSING A CHANGE OF STATE JUST AS THAT ON LINE 560.
HERE IS THE MAIN BODY OF THE PROGRAM FOR DECODING ROMAN NUMERALS:

```
300 REM MAIN PROGRAM STARTS
310 PRINT "TYPE ROMAN NUMBERS LETTER BY LETTER"
320 PRINT "END NUMBERS WITH * END RUN WITH **"
330 PRINT "NUMBERS ENDING IV & IX NEED NO *"
340 PRINT
350 PRINT "START"
360 LET R = 1
370 LET M = 0
380 LET C = 0
390 LET P = 0
400 LET R = 1
410 FOR K = 1 TO 7
420 IF T$ = "**" THEN 610
430 IF T$ = "*" THEN 580
440 FOR K = 1 TO 7
450 IF T$ = CS(K) THEN 480
460 PRINT "CRAZY ROMAN NUMBER"
470 GO TO 340
480 LET X = A(R, K)
490 IF X < 0 THEN 460
500 REM ENSURE ONLY 3 OCCURRENCES OF ANY LETTER
510 LET C = (1 - ABS(SGN(X - P))) * (1 + C)
520 IF C > 2 THEN 460
530 LET P = K
540 REM ACUMULATE RESULT IN M; CHANGE STATE R
550 LET M = M + INT(X / 100)
560 LET R = X - 100 + INT(X / 100)
570 IF R = 0 THEN 400
580 REM PRINT THE RESULT
590 PRINT M
600 GO TO 340
610 END
```

IN THIS EXAMPLE THE FIRST PART OF EACH ELEMENT OF THE SYMBOL-STATE TABLE IS SIMPLY A NUMBER TO BE ADDED INTO VARIABLE "M". IN MORE SERIOUS APPLICATIONS THIS WOULD BE THE LINE NUMBER OF A SUBROUTINE. AFTER PICKING UP AN ELEMENT AS AT LINE 410 THERE WOULD BE AN "ON" INSTRUCTION CAUSING A JUMP TO THE PARTICULAR SUBROUTINE SELECTED BY THAT ELEMENT. AFTER RETURNING FROM THE SUBROUTINE THERE WOULD BE AN INSTRUCTION CAUSING A CHANGE OF STATE JUST AS THAT ON LINE 560.
A PROBLEM COMMON TO INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE.

Here is an example of an “algorithm” / computer jargon for “method” by which you can trace the quickest route through a network of “nodes” and “edges”. Another application of the technique shown is “critical-path analysis”.

This algorithm works as long as there is no more than one edge in one direction between any two nodes.

---

This is how it works. You keep track of things as shown in the sketch below for node 2.

```
START  10.0  0  12.0  5  9.0
        |      |     |     |
        4    |      |     |     |
        |      |  16.0|
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A problem common to industry and commerce.

Here is an example of an "algorithm" (computer jargon for "method") by which you can trace the quickest route through a network of "nodes" and "edges". Another application of the technique shown is "critical-path analysis".

This algorithm works as long as there is no more than one edge in one direction between any two nodes.

Starting at node 3, visit each node in turn 3, 4, 5, 6, continuing round again 4, 5, 6, 1, 2, etc. until all the "switches" are "off". At each node do the following as described for node 2:

1. Look at the switch in A(2,1). If this is "off" then go on to the next node. If it is "on" then:
2. Pick up the best time so far. This is in A(2,2).
3. Use the head of chain in A(2,4) to start looking at all nodes running out of node 2. For each link in the chain do the things described below with specific reference to node 5:

A(1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Node</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This is how it works. You keep track of things as shown in the sketch below for node 2.

\[
\begin{align*}
A(2,1) &= 0 \\
A(2,2) &= 1000000 \\
A(2,3) &= 0 \\
A(2,4) &= 0
\end{align*}
\]

Having completed work at each node, switch off that node.

Arrays A(\cdot) & B(\cdot) must be prepared before working round the nodes as described above. All the switches must be switched on, some impossibly high journey times put into the second column of A(\cdot), and every node must be linked to the nodes running out of it. The journey time to the starting node must be set to zero.

Illustrating Basic Page 106
**Chapter 3**

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**Illustrating Basic Page 108**

*Pick up the node number (initially this is 5).*

*Pick up the time to travel along the edge to that node (initially 0.0) and add this to the time already picked up from A(2,2) to give T.*

*Consult A(5,2) to see if you have just found a better route. If so:*  
- Switch "off" at A(5,1).  
- Replace old best time A(5,2) with T.  
- Put node number 2 into A(5,3) thus building a chain through nodes on the best route.

Having completed work at each node, switch off that node.

Arrays A(,) & B(,) must be prepared before working round the nodes as described above. All the switches must be switched on, some impossibly high journey times put into the second column of A(,), and every node must be linked to the nodes running out of it. The journey time to the starting node must be set to zero.

For the problem illustrated opposite the first line of input data would be: 6, 9, 3, 6 and array A(,) would become:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A(1,1)</th>
<th>A(1,2)</th>
<th>A(1,3)</th>
<th>A(1,4)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Chapter 3**

Here is the main part of the program. Variable K counts the number of times node 1 is passed whilst cycling through the nodes, but K is set back to zero if a change is made to the route. Thus when K gets to 2 all switches are off and the solution can be printed.

Running this program with the data shown opposite produces the result:

**Quickest way from 3 to 6 takes 31 thru 6 5 4 2 1 3**

At the end of a run the second column of A(,) stores the quickest times from node 5 to all other nodes in the network.
**CHAPTER 6**

**PRACTICAL COMPUTING **

**JULY 1979**

**CHAPTER 6**

**PICK UP THE NODE NUMBER (INITIALLY THIS IS 5).**

**PICK UP THE TIME TO TRAVEL ALONG THE EDGE TO THAT NODE (INITIALLY 0).** ADD THIS TO THE TIME ALREADY PICKED UP FROM A(2, 2) TO GIVE T.

**CONSULT A(5, 2) TO SEE IF YOU HAVE JUST FOUND A BETTER ROUTE.** IF SO

- SWITCH "ON" AT A(5, 1).
- REPLACE OLD BEST TIME A(5, 2) WITH T.
- PUT NODE NUMBER 2 INTO A(5, 3) THUS BUILDING A CHAIN THROUGH NODES ON THE BEST ROUTE.

HAVING COMPLETED WORK AT EACH NODE, SWITCH OFF THAT NODE.

**ARAYS A(,) & B(,) MUST BE PREPARED BEFORE WORKING ROUND THE NODES AS DESCRIBED ABOVE.** ALL THE SWITCHES MUST BE SWITCHED ON, SOME IMPOSSIBLY HIGH JOURNEY TIMES PUT INTO THE SECOND COLUMN OF A(,), AND EVERY NODE MUST BE LINKED TO THE NODES RUNNING OUT OF IT. THE JOURNEY TIME TO THE STARTING NODE MUST BE SET TO ZERO.

**FOR THE PROBLEM ILLUSTRATED OPPOSITE THE FIRST LINE OF INPUT DATA WOULD BE: ? 6, 9, 3, 6 AND ARRAY A(,) WOULD BECOME: **

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A(1)</td>
<td>100000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A(2)</td>
<td>100000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A(3)</td>
<td>100000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A(4)</td>
<td>100000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A(5)</td>
<td>100000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**HERE IS THE MAIN PART OF THE PROGRAM.** VARIABLE K COUNTS THE NUMBER OF TIMES NODE 1 IS PASSED Whilst CYCLING THROUGH THE NODES, BUT K IS SET BACK TO ZERO IF A CHANGE IS MADE TO THE ROUTE. THUS WHEN K GETS TO 2 ALL SWITCHES ARE OFF AND THE SOLUTION CAN BE PRINTED.

**RUNNING THIS PROGRAM WITH THE DATA SHOWN OPPOSITE PRODUCES THE RESULT: **

**QUICKEST WAY FROM 3 TO 6 TAKES 31 THRU 6 5 4 2 1 3 AT THE END OF A RUN THE SECOND COLUMN OF A(,) STORES THE QUICKEST TIMES FROM NODE 5 TO ALL OTHER NODES IN THE NETWORK.**

**ILLUSTRATING BASIC PAGE 108**

**ILLUSTRATING BASIC PAGE 109**
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PRACTICAL COMPUTING July 1979
Conclusion

An extremely useful and well-written book, low on waffle and high on information content, and geared to the computing professional who needs to grasp the concepts and need for communications protocols quickly.

Cheap Video Cookbook

by Don Lancaster; published 1978 by Howard W. Sams - handled here by Prentice Hall International; A5 paperback, 258 pages; £6.55.

Another offering from Lancaster, this time not so cheap but certainly informative and, as always, well-written. Lancaster has the kind of enthusiasm so often lacking in technical texts.

Cheap Video Cookbook is something of a departure from his familiar Cookbook series on RTL, TTL and CMOS in that it's the first to cover a specific microprocessor application - and, indeed, a particular hobby microcomputer kit, the Kim-1.

Briefly, the text explains the theory behind the construction of an add-on module for the Kim-1 which provides character and graphics displays on a suitably-modified TV set.

Comprehensive

The book divides easily into four parts, the first expounding the advantages of a microprocessor-based approach and explaining two special design concepts, the upstream tap - a means of allowing the graphics software to access central memory - and the SCAN micro instruction, which ensures high-speed output of generated characters.

There's a comprehensive section on designing and programming the necessary software, for which you'll need a fairly good knowledge of the architecture and instruction set of the 6502. Following that Lancaster has a "getting-it-together" chapter on hardware which won't tax your brain too much.

Lastly, he offers a short section on transparency utilising spare processor time to run a user's programme. This is rather disappointing, as it hints at what to do instead of describing any specific transparency techniques; still, it is but a minor complaint.

There are two potential pitfalls for the U.K. reader using this Stateside book. One is at the components level. In a sense the book is a construction manual - you'll need the chips - two are rather specialised - and the American-made PCB. Another is the problem of adapting the design ideas for other microprocessors more popular with British-based kit manufacturers, notably the Zilog Z-80, as used for the Nascom.

Drive and humour

In fact, for various reasons, your reviewer is convinced that the Z-80 is the only microprocessor other than those from the 6800/6502 family which could easily support the suggested design. The display (TV set) will also need modification, which is curious since it would have been easy to add-in a UHF modulator to the basic design.

Don't be deterred, though. The book is a veritable mine of information and it is written with the kind of drive and humour one doesn't find in corresponding British texts.

Mercifully, it's also free of the kind of condescending writing which seems so much in vogue nowadays. All credit to Lancaster for realising that it's not the financial one. It is certainly expensive. Of its nominal 119 pages excluding introduction, quotes from previous reviews and a poor index - there are at most the equivalent of 90 pages of print. As they are in typewriting style, the large-format pages carry only the equivalent of a paperback of 100 pages.

The book is divided into sections dealing with State-of-the-Art, The Personal Computer in Business, Software and the Personal Computer and The Industry View. In all there are 13 articles, of which at least five are written by personnel of various companies.

Supplement A is an article from Practical Computing December, 1978, reprinted without even the benefit of editing to remove such redundancies as the fact that the Pet "was reviewed in our October issue" and "In forthcoming issues of Practical Computing we shall examine the three approaches to buying a business system".

Supplement B is another reprint, a glossary of microcomputer terms from the material Digital Equipment issues with the LSI-11.

Conclusion

Definitely not recommended. An expensive way to obtain a small amount of information. The contents are definitely lightweight. If you know the difference between a Pet and a poodle you won't learn anything.-R.G.
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PRACTICAL COMPUTING July 1979
**Printer tip**

**WE HEARD** this one from reader Benny Thomson of Norwood. It looks good for business users and others writing frequently to a printer. It seems you can PEEK at (decimal location) 14312 to find the line printer status. If it contains value 63, it is on and ready to print; 233 means "on but unavailable"; and 255 signifies "off".

The point is that programs which do a great deal of printer output can grind to a halt if the printer is not available. So Thomson offers this subroutine to be called before an LPRINT:

```
READ C: PEAK Location 14312
```

and the rest of the subroutine takes you away to do something else before trying again.

**Business user's view**

**THE AUTHOR** works for a large commercial group which makes extensive use of time-sharing bureaux but which is now interested in the idea of cheap microcomputers for its staff. Company policy dictates that the writer remains anonymous.

ALONG with many others, at the Tandy presentations in London, we saw only the Level 1 TRS-80; we were impressed and subsequently we bought a 16K 2 Level 2 machine at a local Tandy store.

It has been in constant use since then and its performance has been sufficiently impressive for it now to have a major impact on our entire approach to the use of computer-based techniques.

That is not to say there have not been problems. First, Level 2 is essential for sensible computing, though you need a good grasp of Basic before you can use the manual — in contrast to the superb Level 1 introduction.

**Twice as fast**

With the Level 2 system, the cassette tape is read and written twice as fast as Level 1; this must be close to the reasonable limits of a domestic cassette recorder, as our system has been very prone to load errors, in spite of the fact that we use digital-quality tapes and have the mechanism. In our view, both are essential modifications, though load errors have still not been eliminated.

It is critical to check volume levels and stay at the one which is acceptable. We clean the tape-heads each day and have a tape-head de-magnetiser. As a matter of procedure we save four copies of long programs and we always use CLOAD? to check the integrity of each copy.

There has also been a distinct lack of software until recently, a situation which is now improving. We have bought a renumbering system and are about to obtain the Electric Pencil word processor — it is difficult to appreciate the full power of this software because it is all priced very economically.

**Outlay saved**

We see the TRS-80 as a very versatile piece of equipment. It can be considered a word processor, intelligent terminal, or key-to-tape for processor. We feel our initial outlay has already been saved several times in terms of a reduction in external expenditure with time-sharing bureaux. It has also opened the door to many applications which could not be justified in a £20 to £30 per hour cost environment.

Given that micros compete with many of the peripheral activities of a mainframe installation and often with much better response times, the next few years will show exactly how far the design concept can go.

The only real constraint, it seems to us, is data storage — for both reliability and volume. When this becomes available at a cost comparable to that of the CPU, one really will be close to having an IBM 370 on one's desk top.

**Startling**

We were fortunate that we already had a Texas Instruments Silent 700 ASR, a 30bps thermal printer terminals. For £50 we could buy a TRS 232 interface to link it to the TRS-80. As the associated software diverts the print output to the cassette recorder leads, we obtain hard-copy on this terminal without the Tandy expansion interface. Even more startling to us is the claim that the associated software can drive a printer at 9,600 baud — so much for the 1,200 baud limitation that the bureau was using.

Two interesting considerations emerged from the interface exercise. We had already discovered that there was a high degree of overlap between the TRS-80 Basic and that of the time-sharing bureau. This overlap provided the mechanism for using the TRS-80 for program development. The cassettes on the Silent 7000 ASR provided the means of capturing this program and transmitting the tested program to the bureau.

**Characters lost**

The second point is that we were able to alter the associated software for the RS232 interface. With program lines greater than the 80-character print width of the Silent 700, characters were lost while the carriage return was operating. This also occurs with the time-sharing bureau and is due to a lack of delay characters (nulls) with a terminal-generated as opposed to a system-generated end of line.

The print software now counts the length of each line and when the specified print width is exceeded will supply the necessary nulls. It also proved possible to provide some extra code, so that we could also obtain a screen print from the contents of the disc memory — though not for the graphics, unfortunately.

This is done by making the extra code a USR with a CALL to the print driver routine for each character to be printed. As it is written in machine code, this routine should also operate at up to 9,000 baud.

**TANDY FORUM is devoted to the Tandy TRS-80. We will be using it to pass on news about the TRS-80 and its supplier and product announcements from Tandy and other vendors of compatible equipment. Above all, these are pages for users, and would-be users, of this personal computer. We want you to send tips, queries, moans and comments, and we want this page to become a market-place for TRS-80 Information.**

We consider that the TRS-80 can also work as a fairly sophisticated data-capture device working in a similar manner. Given that intelligent terminals cost £10,000 or more, the TRS-80 can provide many of these features — arguably with more processing power — at an impressively low cost. If we can obtain a two-way RS232 interface we will be able to load both data and programs into the TRS-80, that is, load both data and programs into the fea-
tures of an intelligent terminal completely.

**Our only other major complaint is that without the disc system we are limited to one system routine at a time and there can be a noticeable impact on memory. Still, one can at least assess the pros and cons — which is of course the Tandy intention — and then make the disc upgrade.**
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User group news

Since April, when the user group came into being and was first publicised, response has been good, but it could be better. Membership is growing daily and every post brings more enquiries: the problem is, however, that most of them are from the hobbyist.

There is nothing wrong with that but many Apples have been sold into business; so businessmen, please note you need the Apple Users’ groups, too.

User groups form an important back-up service; the more members they have the more information available to all. Surprisingly, one group from which response has been small is the Apple dealers. So far we have had only one reply from the 14 distributors.

Making life easy

Applesoft II is an easy language to use but in it there are a few traps for the unwary. For instance, this statement will cause problems:

IF Y = (A) THEN PRINT I

This is because the Applesoft parsing action causes the statement to be read as:

IF Y = (A) THEN PRINT I

Hence the syntax error.

The solution is simple; enclose ‘A’ in parenthesis. This will stop Applesoft parsing of the letter combination and thus ‘recognising’ the reserved word AT. So if this statement is entered everything will be fine:

IF Y = (A) THEN PRINT I

All roads lead to ROM

Programs written using the Applesoft ROM card will not run if Applesoft is loaded from tape or disc; programs written without a ROM card, using the tape or disc Applesoft, won’t run either, but don’t despair. To run a program written using the ROM card, LOAD the program and then CALL 3314. It should then run.

A program written using the disc or tape Applesoft can be run with the ROM card by LOADING the program and typing CALL L 4514.

These CALL statements move the memory pointers to the appropriate place; the tape or disc Applesoft will occupy a different location in the memory from the ROM version and consequently the program will start at a different position.

Manual problem

Those users who have bought disc drives will probably be disappointed with the rather brief documentation. Apple has promised a new manual, but until it appears we’ll try and smooth out some of the hassles.

Graphics programs

Lengthy programs involving a fair amount of string handling and graphics may be limited because the string space fills with old data and runs over into the high-resolution screens.

To initiate some house cleaning and avoid this problem, two things can be done:

1. Insert X = FRE (0) into your program, which deletes all unused strings.

2. Set the address of the lowest memory location the program can use above the H resolution graphics screen. LOMEN: 24576 will enable you to use both pages 1 and 2 of the high-resolution graphics.

Graphics re-visited

Looking through an issue of Contract, the American Apple User Group newsletter, we found a neat summary of how to use both pages 1 and 2 of the memory.

Ordinarily, Apple displays only page 1 of its memory locations — locations 1024-2047 — but it is possible to display page 2 — locations 2048-3071 — as well; if you know how to do this, use of page 2 will give you ‘instant’ black screens and snap your graphics or text material on and off clearly.

Before you can use page 2, however, you must tell Apple not to put any variables in locations lower than 3072 — in other words, set LOMEN: 3072. After you have done this, you are free to move the contents of page 1 to page 2, re-load page 1 with new data and switch back and forth between the two pages.

Here is how to do it, using the general-purpose block movement routines built into the Apple monitor:

POKE 46 (old starting address mod 256)
POKE 47 (old ending address mod 256)
POKE 50 (old ending address /256)
POKE 51 (new starting address /256)
POKE 52 (new starting address mod 256)
POKE 65 (the actual move command)
Now, to use page 2 (remembering to set LOMEN: 3072 (or higher):

POKE 46, 0; POKE 47, 4; POKE 50, 125;
POKE 61, 7; POKE 65, 0; POKE 67, 8; CALL 466
POKE 12345678, 0
To switch back and forth between pages 1 and 2:

POKE -16297, 0 (display page 2)
POKE -16300, 0 (display page 1)

If both pages contain similar graphics figures, switching between them will yield simple animation. Further effects may be gleaned from an inspection of the list of POKEs on page 30 of the Apple II Reference Manual.

Note that this will not work with Applesoft in ROMs. It starts at hex 800, the second page of graphic space. A block move into this area will lose your Applesoft Basic.

Apple Shoppe

Apple Shoppe is the name of an interesting newsletter we received from a Californian computer shop, Computer Components of Orange County. Volume 1 Number 1 was produced on the Apple II with a $50 word processor package and a Trandcom thermal printer — somewhat ugly workaday output with no true descendents.

Most of its 16 pages are interesting and/or useful. We have asked permission to reprint two pieces, including a neat introduction to the Apple disc and a clever workshop, article on How to write a mailing list program.

PAM

PAM is a Pet add-on memory from OMB Electronics. It is available in 8K, 16K, 24K and 32K versions. The 24K version upgrades the Pet memory to the full 32K addressable in Basic; 8K cards are available separately to augment 8K, 16K and 24K versions at a later date.

Operation is by plugging-in to the memory expansion port, using the connector provided, and to the mains. Pet power consumption, temperature and, most important, the Commodore warranty are unaffected.

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Circle No. 186

PRACTICAL COMPUTING July 1979
How to interface to a mainframe computer

Computers can talk to each other. In particular, microcomputers can talk to minis or large mainframes and there are good reasons to do so, as a great deal more than aesthetic pleasure can be derived from their union. Distributed processing of this form can be used to implement data entry systems, point-of-sale data capture, and many other cost-effective organisations. At the very least the micro can save the mainframe user the price of a VDU.

These articles will deal with the Commodore Pet because of its popularity, though the unusual design of the keyboard on the 8K Pet and its interfaces make it an unlikely prospect for intelligent terminal work.

First let us deal with interfacing the Pet to a mainframe computer. Do you have a hard-wired line, or will you be using a modem? A direct connection via a hard-wired line is the easiest to work with but it requires close proximity.

Given that you are more likely to use a modem, you can choose one of two ways. You can stay with the IEEE interface on the Pet and buy an IEEE-standard modem – a somewhat esoteric device in today's context; or you can opt for an RS232 modem plus an RS232 interface adaptor.

Two options

I prefer the latter course. An RS232 modem is much easier to obtain second-hand and bi-directional IEEE 488/RS232 interface adaptors are available widely – I use the one from Bailey Associates.

The cost of the two options is about the same but having an RS232 interface on the Pet also provides the great advantage of being able to use any RS232 printer on the market.

by Michael Whitehead

If you decide to implement the project outlined in these articles, you can obtain an RS232 modem in the form of an acoustic coupler – which is just an ordinary telephone handset – from any manufacturer of computer peripherals. Anderson-Jacobson has a good reputation, though a new AJ coupler will cost more than £200.

You probably will not be able to beat Modular Technology for price for a new one. You might also be able to get one from a second-hand dealer like Electronic Brokers Ltd or possibly you could contact an amateur computer club which has one.

Remote-access bureaux use them a great deal, so if you have contacts in one of them try that source.

For the interface adaptor, though, you do not have much alternative but to order new; try Bailey Associates, Amplicon or SDK Projects.

The second requirement is the dial-up number of the destination, plus information on the communications protocol, transmission rates and parity, passwords if relevant, operating system, editor, and high-level languages available. If you are using a mainframe, most of this information should be relatively easy to obtain, except perhaps for details on the protocol.

The most common transmission rate is 300 baud (bits per second) which equates roughly to 30 characters per second; each character consists of eight data bits, plus a start bit and a stop bit. You cannot use an acoustic coupler at data rates above this, incidentally.

A rate of 110 baud is also common; it represents the transmission of 10 characters per second, as each character consists of 10 bits, plus a start bit and two stop bits.

The Bailey interface contains a number of switches which allow your Pet to talk to other RS232 devices at any of a wide range of speeds, although it may take a little trial and error to decide on the correct parity and stop-bit settings.

Then the only thing you need is some software to allow your Pet to drive its built-in IEEE interface quickly and efficiently. Although the Bailey adaptor permits the Pet to communicate at the RS232 standard, all data entering or leaving the Pet must go through the IEEE interface, so this must be the target for your software.

Novelty

To start, you want to be able to input and output characters. It can be done from Pet Basic, a novelty with which you may want to experiment for an hour or so. Once the excitement wanes, however, it becomes very clear that Pet Basic is not even fast enough to simulate a dumb terminal running at 110 baud. Surely we are aiming for a much higher form of life.

With Basic out of the running, that leaves Assembler. But where, you might ask, are all the ROM routines which Pet Basic uses to drive the IEEE interface?

How can I assess them from Assembler?

(continued on page 101)
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PRACTICAL COMPUTING  July 1979
Let us deal first with output, as it's easier. The general steps required are to assign an IEEE listener device, output one or more characters to that device, and then to de-assign that listener. The routine in figure 1 may be called from an assembler program to output a character in the accumulator.

This routine is only 39 bytes long and if used intelligently will run at speeds of up to 9,600 baud. You may also want to add some code to it to convert lower-case characters from their Pet representation to ASCII, though it is suggested that the Bailey interface will soon do it for you.

Listen until it either comes up with a character or times-out. The general scenario for inputting a character from the IEEE interface is:
- Assign an IEEE listener device.
- De-assign all talker devices.
- If you still have no character, go back to the first step. This scenario is implemented by the routine in figure 2, which always returns with a valid character in the accumulator.

Unfortunately, there is a problem which centres on a PLA register at location $E84D used to control the 64-millisecond time-out on input. Unless it can be re-set to zero, any call to the ROM IEEE input routine will be doomed to fail immediately on a time-out.

Not solved

Although I have spoken to Commodore about the problem, it has not yet been solved. For the moment the solution is to copy the ROM routine but to use some other mechanism to effect a time-out, such as looping around the input-status-test instruction a maximum number of times.

That is the approach which has been taken in the input program presented in figure 2. It works well but unfortunately it slows the whole process somewhat, so that it will not run reliably at speeds greater than 600 baud.

Once the output routine, you may wish to modify the input routine in figure 2 to convert incoming lower-case characters to their equivalent Pet representation.

So we can input and output characters. How do we assemble our building blocks? A feasible project might be a dumb terminal simulator, often called a terminater routine. That kind of program, while executing, might convert your Pet into, for example, a 300 baud full-duplex upper-case-only VDU.

Next month I shall offer such a program and discuss some of the more interesting aspects of distributed computing of which Pet owners are capable.

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PRACTICAL COMPUTING July 1979
Finding the good days

Everyone has ups and downs. Biorhythm theory suggests that those ups and downs aren’t as arbitrary as they seem. There is some evidence to suggest that good and bad days follow regular cycles throughout your life from the moment of birth. It’s possible to calculate those cycles – and here is a program to do it.

There are three biorhythm cycles, and while each may vary in intensity of effect, they do not vary in length. The shortest is the 23-day physical cycle, affecting energy and self-confidence. The sensitivity, or emotional cycle, is 28 days, and governs mood, optimism, irritability. The intellectual cycle, 33 days, controls the ability to be logical, to absorb and recall facts, and powers of reasoning.

Each cycle goes through a positive – plus or active – phase and a negative or regenerative – minus or passive – phase.

On the physical cycle, the 11½ days are held to be a good time for intensive training in athletics or for any activity requiring physical stamina. Those plus days represent physical strength, endurance, energy, resistance to infection and disease, and physical confidence. Some doctors, we gather, will perform scheduled surgery only between the second and ninth day of this cycle.

On the minus days of your physical cycle you are re-charging and you tend to tire more easily. That is a good time for athletes to train to store energy.

by Martin Collins

The 28-day emotional cycle corresponds approximately to a woman’s menstrual cycle; it is not identical to it, though, and it occurs in both men and women. On the plus days you are likely to be cheerful, co-operative, considerate, creative and loving; generally you should have a positive outlook on life.

Conversely, the 14 minus days are conducive to moodiness and negativism. You may exhibit signs of irritability. Awareness of that fact is important to drivers, operators of complex machinery and others who need to react quickly and rely on sound judgment.

The first half of your 33-day intellectual cycle is the best time to absorb new subjects. A person finds it easier to study, write creatively, understand mathematics or pursue any intellectual efforts. Equally, your intellectual faculties will be less keen during the last half of this cycle.

The highs and lows vary with individuals. Factors such as age, excitability and health determine to what degree these traits will apply to each person. The day your cycle changes from a plus to a minus or from a minus to a plus is critical; (continued on page 105)
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PRACTICAL COMPUTING
July 1979
nonsense, but the body of scientific and statistical opinion suggests otherwise. Doctors and sportsmen seem the two groups who are keenest on biorhythm theory. And there is claims research centres of varying degrees of authenticity, including the Biorhythm Research Association at Normanton-on-Soar, Loughborough, Leicestershire. BRA has an impressive suite of documentation on the subject if you want to pursue it.

The program was written originally for a minicomputer and converted for a Pet. We have tried to keep the Basic as non-specific as possible, so most of the statement lines should transfer easily to other microcomputers.

The exceptions are line 3, which clears the screen, and several lines which reference a printer channel, including line 1, which opens the channel.

We ran the printout on a Diablo daisywheel printer without English characters, so the hash sign # is printed as a pound sign. All our PRINT statements (line 90 onwards) send data to the print channel; in the Pet Basic it is done with the statement PRINT 4 (print on channel 4) but our listing reproduced this as PRINT$E4, for which we apologise.

For the sample run we omitted lines 1024 and 1026. They give a row of dots on the right of the printout for each date; is a kind of diary facility for you to add notes but obviously it requires you to have a printer capable of printing more than 80 columns across the page.

The program asks for your birth-date, then calculates and prints your biorhythms. Obviously, 'T' denotes the intellectual cycle, 'P' the physical 'E' the emotional.

When two cycles coincide, the letters are replaced by a plus sign. The dotted line down the centre shows the crossover point; critical dates are flagged by asterisks in the left.

The critical period does not necessarily occur at the same time, you ought to be at your most alert and your problems are magnified. Similarly, two or three cycles peak at the same time, you ought to be at your most effective.

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To catch a good idea

DID YOU read the results of the Practical Computing Christmas competition? Cleaning oil slicks, dieting for diabetics and re-creating historical episodes in the classroom were only a few of the ideas submitted; and I would be willing to bet that there were other really good ideas doomed to oblivion simply because they didn’t win.

The other day I was chatting to a doctor and a naval engineer about pros-thetics. The ones we were dreaming up were hands. There are two main problem areas in the design of a useful artificial hand, the power supply and the control system. The most sophisticated modern ones use compressed gas for power and, while it is far from convenient, it can do the job pretty well. Yet, the only word to describe the control is crude and it was this aspect that we were discussing.

Most generally-available prosthetic hands rely on muscular movements in other parts of the body - typically the upper arm and shoulders - to provide both power and control. The nett result is that to light a cigarette can involve expenditure of considerable amounts of energy, as well as producing movements reminiscent of a circus contortionist.

As it happens the nerves supplying a missing hand are still intact over most of their course from brain to limb and are hard at work trying to control the non-existent extremity. In addition, they are conveniently firing-out pulses of real live electricity which can be detected easily with little more than a good amplifier and filter arrangement. Until now most ideas of linking nerves to transducers have involved microsurgery at the nerve endings, as well as a need for wires physically to cross the skin barrier.

What we wanted was a receptor system which could be implanted anywhere in the general region of the nerves concerned by any competent surgeon and what we evolved was a simple web of wires, each linked to an op-amp and feeding its signals direct to a microprocessor, which could then do all the decoding necessary to turn these signals into some sort of sense.

The CPU chip, complete with op-amps, a little memory and one or two other things could, we decided, be packaged in such a form that the owner’s blood supply could pass right through it to help dissipate the odd couple of watts of heat it gave off.

Extending ourselves further, we realised that with a power requirement of only a few hundred milliamps at around five volts we could bury a few square centimetres of thermocouples up the arm to give a completely self-contained unit needing no batteries, radioactive sources or anything else.

As a final step we had to cross the skin barrier, but with the aid of any one of a dozen or more transducers ranging from LEDs to Hall-effect semiconductors, we reckoned that that problem qualified as minor.

My doctor friend could see nothing wrong with the idea; the naval engineer reckoned he could construct the hand quite easily - powered by compressed gas - and I could see nothing over-difficult about the computing side of things.

So why won’t we be seeing the bionic hand in use this year? Are we really doomed to a sort of electronic voyeurism, watching a never-ending stream of applications being discussed while the best we can do is reach out and occasionally grab one for further development while the rest of them slide off into oblivion?

I don’t pretend to know the answer, but if you do, feel free to write and tell me.

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International Microcomputers Minicomputers Microprocessors. Venue: Palais des Expositions, Geneva, Switzerland. The Exhibition will be displaying computers – mini and micro – peripherals, components and services from more than 100 international companies. The technical conference is designed to provide an exchange of applications, development and design technologies in many areas of the industry. There will also be two ICS Advanced Technology courses, run simultaneously – Microprocessor Applications Development and Small Computing Systems. Technical sessions and courses will be in English only. More information from Kiver Communications, S.A. (U.K. branch office), Millbank House, 171-185, Ewell Road, Surbiton, Surrey, Tel: 01-390 0281.

Microprocessor Seminar for Non-Electronic Engineers. Venue: Manchester. One-day seminar for mechanical and production engineers, supervisors and managers in industry. Fundamentals explained, demonstrations, examples of applications and discussions. Attendance limited to 10 people and the cost is £30 per delegate. More information from Mektronic Consultants, Linden House, 116, Rectory Lane, Prestwich, Manchester, M25 5DB. Tel: 061-798 0803.

Computers in Small Businesses. Venue: London. This one-day course introduces guidelines for organisations taking their first steps towards computerisation. It is designed for the first-time user and assumes little knowledge of computer techniques. The course costs £50 including lunch and light refreshment. Highly recommended for those about to enhance a business with a computer. More information from Course Registrar, MSS Computer & Business Consultancy Ltd, MSS House, 49 Chapel Road, Worthing, West Sussex.

Introduction to Basic Programming. Venue: Lecture Room, Sumlock-Anita House, London, EC1. A threeday course which will continue on the following two Wednesdays. It goes through various elementary stages such as explaining what a program is, to file structures and applications packages. Full course fee is £90 plus VAT. Sumlock-Bondain advises early booking as only 12 places per course are available. Tel: 01-253 2447.

The 1979 Microcomputer Show Incorporating The DIY Computer Fair. Venue: Bloomsbury Centre Hotel, London. Essential for all computer freaks. This year there will be a record number of exhibitors who will bring all the latest microcomputer equipment to the heart of London. Entrance fee £1. For more information, see our seven-page guide, which tells you all you need to know about this event.

International Word Processing Exhibition and Conference. Venue: Wembley Conference Centre, London. Those who are considering buying a word processor could do worse than go to this comprehensive exhibition. All you ever wanted to know about the subject will be available in the form of literature, demonstrations of all the latest equipment, and a two-day advanced conference, and special-interest, half-day seminars. Admission is £2. More information from BETA Exhibitions, Business Equipment Trade Association, 109 Kingsway, London, WC2.

Advanced Basic. Venue: London, EC1. This three-day course is a follow-up to the Sumlock-Bondain Introduction to Basic Programming and is intended for those who have taken one of the previous courses or have a ground knowledge of the language. Full course fee is £130 plus VAT. More information from Sumlock-Bondain Ltd., Sumlock-Anita House, 15 Clerkenwell Close, London, EC1.

Microprocessors is a two-day seminar at the Cafe Royal, London, organised by Informex in association with the Institute of Data Processing Management. Speakers include experts from the major semiconductor companies. Cost for the two days is £78 plus VAT, which includes lunch and refreshments for both days. Contact: Jan Clarke, Informex-London Ltd., 61, Harland Avenue, Sidcup, Kent. Tel: 01-300 0380.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Machine</th>
<th>Price</th>
<th>System</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apple II</td>
<td>£299</td>
<td>Apple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PET</td>
<td>£199</td>
<td>PET</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exidy Sorcerer</td>
<td>£299</td>
<td>SEED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SORD M100 ACE</td>
<td>£999</td>
<td>Research Machines</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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PRACTICAL COMPUTING July 1979

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PRACTICAL COMPUTING  July 1979
ROSTRONICS Computer Centre can scarcely be described as off the beaten track. The shop is sandwiched between a photographer's studio and an undertakers in Wandsworth High Street, in south London.

Such a location is evidently good for the microcomputer business, though, as Rostronics has sold a steady 15 to 20 systems a month since opening in January.

This shop is owned and run by its three directors, John Barton, John Pendreich and Rhoda Battersby, who decided to specialise in selling Tandy systems. Barton spent a year looking at all the equipment available on the market and settled on the Tandy "because it offered best value for money".

Critical
Like many people, he is critical of the way Tandy sells computers through shops which do not provide what he considers adequate software and support.

"Specialist in computer business machine systems" reads the shop letterhead, and Rostronics is orientated firmly towards selling commercial systems. It is not really a hobbyist shop, although they are catered for. Barton had his own business printing commercial stationery for a number of years; when he became interested in micros he soon perceived the potential for dealing with paperwork.

"Within a couple of years all businesses with a turnover of £50,000 will have a micro. Everyone will have one, so why not sell them and do the job properly?"

To do the job properly, Rostronics writes its own software and provides its own engineering service. The latter has become so renowned that Tandy owners telephone from all over the country, Rhoda says, for help and advice. The shop employs a full-time engineer and, if necessary, can call upon another four specialist engineers - moonlighting from leading computers manufacturers, who can afford to employ the best.

Repair service
Rostronics is very proud of the maintenance contract it offers. Under the terms of the agreement, Rostronics guarantees to replace an item or repair any fault on a business system within 24 hours of receiving the call.

For that service the user pays 15 percent of the cost of the system per annum; a business system will cost £2,000, so the maintenance agreement would be about £200 pa. This apparently appeals to schools, which are only too conscious of the effect sticky little fingers might have on the school micro.

Rostronics is very particular about the equipment it sells. Everything is tested thoroughly before it leaves the shop and only suppliers with a large maintenance force to be called upon receive orders from Rostronics.

"Our word processing system", Barton says, "is probably our strongest selling point". The Rostronics word processing system comprises a TRS-80 plus the Electric Pencil software and a daisywheel printer. The printer is a Canadian machine, manufactured by Alain Sapper, and Rostronics is the sole importer at the micro end of the market.

Rostronics can also supply continuous stationery and business forms. "There is no other system on the market", Barton claims, "which will give you, at that price, full screen-editing facilities".

About 10 word processing systems have been sold to date and, of course, the customer, receives a computer as well.

Tandy shops sell two kinds of printers; Rostronics sells three - the standard friction-feed and tractor-feed line printers plus the Teletype 43 and the Alain Sapper daisywheel. Rostronics buys its Centronics printers directly from Centronics and can thus sell them for less than the Tandy price.

System desk
Mail order accounts for a large amount of Rostronics business and it is from all over the world. "We even have customers in Bahrain who telephone orders".

"We are always looking at new products appearing in the States", Barton says, "and we also have our 'engines working on some 8in disc drives' - from Tinker Toy, Shugart and Micropolis.

A Rostronics-designed system desk is about to go into production. The desks, available through Tandy shops, are constructed to accommodate the Shugart Micropolis drives in this country and they do not fit the desk.

So Rostronics is building desks which will hold either Shugart or Micropolis disc drives. The desk will also have a line filter to protect the drives from fluctuation in the electric current, and a power supply which will box the eight wires which struggle from the average configuration.

With a view to taking a second machine on board, Barton has been looking around the market again. "The most likely candidate is the ITT 2020", it has good software and is cheaper than the Apple."

Rostronics is in no hurry to adopt another system, though. As Barton points out, "Tandy has sold so many systems that people will be looking for Tandy software and hardware for a long time".

SELLING PROPERLY the aim of Rostronics

Software is written in-house; off-the-shelf packages available include accounts, inventory, cash registers, and sales analysis, as well as the well-known Electric Pencil word processor from the States.

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Circle No. 206
Double density plotting on Pet

BY USING the amazing collection of graphics symbols on the Commodore Pet, it is possible to set up a sequence of logic operators which increase the screen size from 40 characters wide by 25 deep to an apparent 80 x 50 plottable points.

The characters used for this Double Density Plot (DDP) are contained in table 1 in the sequence required for the routine – the importance of this particular order will be apparent later.

Say the new co-ordinate system has its origin (0,0) at the bottom left-hand corner of the screen, giving maximum values of 49 and 79 for Y and X respectively. A normal-sized blank screen character can then be considered as divided into four possible DDP points:

```
| DDY odd | C | B |
| DDY even | DDX | DDX even odd |
```

If you know the screen position (DDY/2, DDX/2) and whether X and Y are odd or even, the character required can be found from table 1.

If A was to be filled (DDY even, DDX odd), the character used from table 1 would be number 2; if C, we would use character number 4.

A problem arises when we want to plot a character at A if the block already contains one or more DD points.

The method used in my subroutine is to construct a byte whith the four least significant bits representing the four possible quarters of the character square. So originally the byte would be 00000000 for a blank.

If we consider bit 0 to represent A, 1 to represent B, 2 to represent C and 3 for D, the byte would change to the following values (U) and configurations when each corner only is filled:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Byte</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Y</th>
<th>X</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>0000/0001</td>
<td>1 Even Odd</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>0000/0010</td>
<td>2 Odd Even</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>0000/0100</td>
<td>4 Odd Even</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>0000/1000</td>
<td>8 Even</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As can be seen from table 1, there are 16 possible arrangements for A, B, C and D, ranging from a blank square to a completely filled-in square. There are also 16 possible values of U if the four most significant bits remain constant.

It is now possible to show why table 1 is arranged in that particular order. If we want to add B to a square which already contains A, the result and value of U must be 3 (bits 0 and 1 set); from table 1 it can be seen that when U is equal to this number, the result is a vertical half-square, which is correct. This rule follows for all the other combinations. Try a few.

Strictly speaking, it is not correct to add the values of the bytes together. If that quarter is already occupied the next bit will be set by a carry rather than the correct one remaining. For example, if B is to be re-plotted one would have added:

```
0000/0010

0000/0010

0000/0010
```

which results in C being set rather than B remaining. This problem of over-plotting is overcome by using the logical OR rather than adding. Each bit in turn is compared and if either bit is set to one, then the result is set to one. So the example becomes:

```
0000/0010

0000/0010

0000/0100
```

(continued on next page)
(continued from previous page)

which leaves us with bit one set and no
carry to bit 2.

At this stage, look at the preliminary
flowchart for the subroutine. This routine
for the subroutine is in basic in about five
lines of PEEEK and POKEing at the
screen, but if we include checks for valid
DDP co-ordinates as well as the facility to
erase squares, the plot routine length
doubles.

That is not excessive use of memory by
any means but the time factor becomes
important, especially on 3D plots. The
obvious answer is a machine code routine
for which a disassembled listing is given at
the end of the article.

The first problem to be overcome in it
was the passing of three values to the
DDP subroutine by the USR function.

The number passed to the machine code is
converted to an integer in locations $3B 3
and $3B4 by subroutine $D0A7. The
method employed was to place the DDP
co-ordinate in the least significant
co-ordinate in the most significant byte

All supplied fully documented with listings
on 9 1/2" B9 or Nesbug format

Machine code, Assembler for Basic coding
forms £1.60 each pad (approx. 180 sheets).

Add £5 for P & P, all prices include VAT.

Send SAE for details.

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Table Two

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TRANSFER CO-ORDS</th>
<th>FIND SCREEN LOCATION</th>
<th>STORE THE X, Y</th>
<th>Z = TABLE LOCATION OF SCREEN CHARACTER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q = O-E</td>
<td>O-E</td>
<td>O-Y</td>
<td>O-Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIND SCREEN LOCATION</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>MAKE IT BLANK</td>
<td>calculate U from DDP X + Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IS THERE A DOUBLE PLOT CHARACTER</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIND SCREEN LOCATION</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>MAKE IT BLANK</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IS THERE A PLOT CHARACTER</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIND SCREEN LOCATION</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>MAKE IT BLANK</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IS THERE A PLOT CHARACTER</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Z = TABLE LOCATION OF SCREEN CHARACTER</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OR U = Z + Y</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y&quot; TABLE CHART TO SCREEN</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10 W = USR (Y*256 + X) ...prints at DDP X,Y
20 W = USR (128+Y*256+X) ...sets bit
seven and erases DDX,DDY

Among other ideas incorporated, I
decided to transfer back from the sub-
routine into W the value of the screen
character at X, Y before alteration; and if
either DDX or DDY were invalid — not
on the screen — USR would return with
W = 1024.

Glitchless plotting is also featured by
using a subroutine — WAIT in listing —
which stops the machine code looking at
writing to the screen at the wrong
time, which means during a screen
refresh cycle.

Cassette offer

Remarks contained in the program
listing explain the sequence of events
simply, so a detailed flowchart is not
required. If anybody has any comments
or improvements on my first attempt at
machine code, I will be only too grateful
to receive them.

For those who would like double
density graphics and who do not yet have
the experience necessary I will be happy
to supply a cassette tape which loads the
routine automatically into the second
cassette buffer, for a nominal £1.50. The
only line required in your program would
be:

10 POKE 1, 58 : POKE 2,3

The program which plotted figure 1
follows:

1 POKE 1, 58 : POKE 2,3
2 PRINT "CLEAR PAGE"
3 T = 230: T1 = 30: T2 = 95: T3 = 4: T4 = 152: T5 = 23: T6 =
0.7: T7 = 40: T8 = 156: T9 = 9: V = 1.
4 S1 = 79: S2 = 44: S3 = 48.
5 DEF FNA(Z) = T1 * EXP(-Z^KZ/T).
6 FOR K = 1 TO 256: NEXT
7 FOR X = -256 TO 255: NEXT
8 FOR Y = -256 TO 255: NEXT
9 W = USR(X + Y*256): NEXT
10 NEXT
11 X = 0
12 Y = 0
13 Z = INT(V*V) + INT(X*Y) + INT(Y) - INT(X)
14 IF Z > 4 THEN 200
15 Z = Z
16 W = USR(X + Y*256 + Z*256)
17 NEXT
18 NEXT
19 NEXT
20 NEXT
21 NEXT
22 NEXT
23 NEXT
24 NEXT
25 NEXT
26 PRINT "CLEAR PAGE"
27 FOR I = 0 TO 255: NEXT
28 FOR I = 0 TO 255: NEXT
29 W = USR(X + Y*256)
30 W = USR(X + Y*256 + Z*256)
31 W = USR(X + Y*256 + Z*256 + W*256)
32 PRINT "CLEAR PAGE"
33 FOR J = 0 TO 255: NEXT
34 W = USR(X + Y*256 + Z*256 + W*256)
35 W = USR(X + Y*256 + Z*256 + W*256 + V*256)
36 W = USR(X + Y*256 + Z*256 + W*256 + V*256 + J*256)
37 W = USR(X + Y*256 + Z*256 + W*256 + V*256 + J*256 + K*256)
38 W = USR(X + Y*256 + Z*256 + W*256 + V*256 + J*256 + K*256 + L*256)
39 W = USR(X + Y*256 + Z*256 + W*256 + V*256 + J*256 + K*256 + L*256 + M*256)

Happy plotting, and the address for the
tape is: A. Clark, 107 Haydon Close, Red
House Farm Estate, Gosforth,
Newcastle-upon-Tyne NE3 2BZ.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hex Address</th>
<th>Machine Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>00A</td>
<td>276390</td>
<td>JR DDA,7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00B</td>
<td>A584</td>
<td>LDA B4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00F</td>
<td>X08</td>
<td>BMI Brk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>031</td>
<td>4AC3C3</td>
<td>JMP Label</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>034</td>
<td>3B64</td>
<td>JR B4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03A</td>
<td>A4C2</td>
<td>LDA 03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03B</td>
<td>BC8303</td>
<td>STA 02,4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03C</td>
<td>9F8D</td>
<td>BEQ EVEN 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03E</td>
<td>A583</td>
<td>STA B2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>041</td>
<td>4A</td>
<td>STA B1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>042</td>
<td>286E</td>
<td>STA 01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>043</td>
<td>7B8E</td>
<td>STA 00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>046</td>
<td>A585</td>
<td>STA B5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>048</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>BCC LOOP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05F</td>
<td>47F20B</td>
<td>LDA B2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>071</td>
<td>A8B8</td>
<td>STA B1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>072</td>
<td>1681</td>
<td>LDA B4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>076</td>
<td>2186</td>
<td>BCC 02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>097</td>
<td>D8F4</td>
<td>BNE LABEL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09B</td>
<td>6B92</td>
<td>STA B1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09D</td>
<td>969Y</td>
<td>BRI ERR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09E</td>
<td>8F82</td>
<td>STA B2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0AE</td>
<td>9A</td>
<td>SEC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0AF</td>
<td>9A32</td>
<td>SEC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0A2</td>
<td>1042</td>
<td>ERR 2, BPL ERR</td>
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<tr>
<td>0AC</td>
<td>A582</td>
<td>BCC LAB2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0AB</td>
<td>246A</td>
<td>LDA B2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0BB</td>
<td>9891</td>
<td>STA B1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0B2</td>
<td>276390</td>
<td>JR DDA,7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0B3</td>
<td>286E</td>
<td>BCC 02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0B6</td>
<td>256D</td>
<td>BRK Label</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0B8</td>
<td>9891</td>
<td>STA B1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0BC</td>
<td>276390</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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Real-time clock for M6800 D2

DESIGNING a real-time clock for a microcomputer development kit, factors like the Motorola MEK6800 D2 should be considered. Among them – is the system clock stable enough for use as a time standard? Is the MPU to be used for tasks other than time-keeping, so that a software-only solution is impractical? Can the 50Hz mains be used as a timing signal? Can the final choice of timing signal be interfaced to the MPU with minimum external hardware?

by Brian Wilkie
Motorola Semiconductors, East Kilbride

Assessing these in relation to a D2 microprocessor requires some appreciation of the hardware already in the kit.

- The D2 uses a crystal oscillator at 614.4KHz which is divided down to 4,800Hz for use in a Kansas City Standard cassette interface.
- It has a hexadecimal keyboard and associated debug monitor, which is ideal for initial clock setting.
- It uses six seven-segment LED displays for output of information. This is ideal for time display, with the proviso that they must be driven in a multiplexed mode by software, using one PIA port as segment drives and another – outputting only one bit high at a time – for digit drives.
- It has provision for using two MCM2708 EPROM. The one located at hex address $6000 – the dollar indicating hexadecimal notation – was selected for this program, although it could be altered easily to fit into the RAM locations lower in the memory map.

Nucleus

We can eliminate some of the options in choice of time standard. The intention of this program was to act as the nucleus of a central heating controller, so a software-only solution can be put aside. Since six LED displays must be refreshed at least 25 times a second – which means 150Hz - a 50Hz interrupt from the mains would be too slow.

Fortunately, the designer of the D2 kit used a 12-stage CMOS counter, the MC14046, to divide down from the crystal clock to drive the cassette interface. The final stage of this counter therefore has a 300Hz square wave which is crystal-controlled and at an ideal frequency for driving the LED display. The only hardware modification necessary on the D2 kit is to connect this 300Hz signal from U18 pin 1 to the user PIA interrupt input CA1, U20 pin 40.

The flowchart and listing show a program to turn this 300Hz signal into a clock. Note that the initialisation puts the start of the interrupt service routine into location $A000, which is, in turn, referred to by the internal JBUG interrupt service routine.

The interrupt service routine is short and simple; such routines are difficult to debug without professional equipment and since the wait-for-interrupt loop has its own software timer, the program can be checked in the absence of an interrupt signal.

The time is stored as three bytes of packed binary-coded decimal information, to facilitate the addition of alarm and on/off time routines to the program.

Time is increased not by an increment instruction but by an add immediate one; this sets the half-carry flag for the subsequent decimal adjust accumulator to restore the number to BCD format.

Expanded easily

In normal operation, the software enters a wait loop, checking continually for the flag byte to be incremented for zero. When this happens every 1/300 second the time counters are incremented; if the displayed time has altered, the new time values are translated into suitable format in the display buffer locations. This facilitates changing to other display formats, such as ASCII, for output on a VDU.

The software then calls a display subroutine which converts one character at a time to seven segments, using a lookup table DIGITBL in JBUG and outputting it to all six LEDs in parallel.

Finally, a new digit is selected by shifting the scan count mask SCNCNT one bit left. At this point the program returns to the waiting loop to await the next interrupt; extra routines such as alarm time checks could, however, be added here.

The software is organised so that even if extra routines like this occasionally last more than the three milliseconds between interrupts, the IRQ service routine will count the unserviced interrupts in the flag register in memory. On returning to the clock program, the time counter is then incremented as many times as required to compensate for missed interrupts.

PRACTICAL COMPUTING July 1979
This program provides a short, efficient and easily-expanded real-time clock facility for the D2 kit. Its major problem is that the clock circuit used in the kit has no facilities for frequency trimming such as is usually employed in electronic watch circuits. Those kits we tested in our laboratory ran to within a few seconds a day; this could be adjusted easily in software - for example, by detecting midnight and making the necessary adjustment in the software.

Real-time clock flowchart
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Kim Project
Morse Code Generator

This month's Kim project shows the Kim-1 microprocessor in a dedicated application as a Morse code generator.

Before an individual is allowed to use the amateur radio frequencies, a Post Office test in Morse proficiency must be passed. Having satisfied that requirement, the radio ham need never look at a Morse key again.

Nevertheless, Morse has many advantages over the other forms of radio transmission; the equipment required is simpler and cheaper than that needed for voice telephony, for instance, particularly at the higher power outputs.

Reception is possible over longer distances and under less favourable circumstances, again requiring less sophisticated receivers.

While it is a slower transmission method than RTTY methods or voice telegraphy, it has the dual advantage of being possible both to send and receive Morse without any specialised equipment. Further, the Morse code can be generated automatically and it can be received by machine as well.

Samuel Morse devised his code originally in 1832, basing it on the newly-discovered properties of electricity and electromagnetism. His initial design for a transmitter involved a series of projections shaped to form the code on template 'portrule', which could be moved under a contact lever to generate the codes.

**Shaped by hand**

At the receiving end, an electromagnet deflected a pencil over a moving reel of paper; the wavy line on the paper would then be deciphered and the message could be read normally.

In succeeding models, the portrule was replaced by the Morse key we know today, each character being shaped by hand. It was nearly 10 years before someone realised that the dot and dash made different sounds on the receiving solenoid and that they could be understood directly; so the writing receiver was abandoned.

Morse code became very popular for telegraphy, but in the 1920s, with Baudot code teleprinters and the like, the Morse code became less widely used.

Morse transmission was nearly abandoned, although Morse transmission became the most sophisticated transmitters could be used, albeit with relative risk of electrocution, to almost equal effect.

Morse has all but disappeared for telegraph transmission but it remains a firm international standard for radio; and the SOS signal has become the definitive distress call.

Each letter, digit, and punctuation mark along with various procedural signals - like invitation to type, end of transmission, error - is represented in Morse code by a combination of between one and eight dots and dashes. A dot is a short period during which signal is present, a dash a somewhat longer period.

There is no specification as to how long a dot should last - typically between one-tenth and one twenty-fifth of a second - but Morse transmission is defined in terms of 'dot' periods. A dash is defined as a period equal to three dots. The spaces between dots and dashes of the same character are equal to one dot. The space between one character and the next is equal to three dots and the interval between adjacent words is equal to seven dots.

**Post Office test**

The Post Office Morse test specifies a rate of 12 five-character words per minute. A radio amateur, who must transmit a call sign at the beginning and end of each contact and at 15-minute intervals during it, may send the call sign either on telephony or Morse telegraphy at a rate of up to 20 words per minute.

One of the applications of the automatic code generator is to repeat the call sign with a single key stroke. In fact, it can be made to repeat any ASCII character string in Morse, although the full ASCII character set is not implemented. Table 1 shows the various ASCII characters with their Morse and hexadecimal equivalents.

A subroutine to translate ASCII characters into Morse equivalents may be used in any number of ways. For instance, the program STRING retrieves bytes successively from the Kim memory and calls the subroutine CHAR to sound the character as Morse, stopping when it reaches a byte containing zero. CHAR will convert an ASCII character in the A-register into Morse and put it out on to two of the user PIO lines.

PRACTICAL COMPUTING July 1979
Unfortunately 'consecutive' Morse characters have unrelated code representations. Whereas in ASCII code the character 'A' is stored as $41 and 'B' as $42, the Morse is '-' and '.' respectively. So we cannot rely on program code to generate Morse from ASCII using simple rules. Because of this each character has its corresponding Morse representation in a look-up table ($026E-$0357).

As each character is a different length, there must be some way of determining where it begins and ends. An initial idea was to store the ASCII byte with the Morse characters and then search sequentially down the table until the required code was found.

A more efficient and elegant solution generates a second table containing the addresses for the start of each letter, digit and symbol ($0200-$026C). Each of those entries is a two-byte address with the letters and digits organised in ASCII order.

**Powerful feature**

To find any particular Morse character, for instance the letter 'C', the numeric value of 'A' ($41) is subtracted from that letter ($43 minus $41), showing that this is the second letter (A is at zero). Because each address is two bytes, this result is multiplied by two, a single shift-left.

One of the most powerful features of the 6502 processor chip used in the Kim is its indirect indexed addressing mode. In this mode any two consecutive bytes in the first 256 bytes of memory may be used as a pointer to some other location in memory. Their contents then act as a pointer to some other location in memory, forming an operand to the current instruction. There is an added bonus that the current contents of the Y register are added to the pointer before the indexing is done.

Figure 1 shows that the process of indirect pointer addressing is used twice to find each Morse character. Consider a call to the subroutine CHAR with the ASCII character 'C' in the A-register.

First a jump to INTER is made; it produces the three-dot inter-character silent period. The parity bit, if there is one, is ANDed out.

Next the character is tested to see if it is a space ($20). If it is, a further six-dot duration of silence will occur and the subroutine returns. Since it is not, and since it is greater or equal to 'A' (BCC) and also less than 'Z' (BPS), the value of ASCII 'A' is subtracted from it.

The shift left (ASL) multiplies the result by two and it is loaded into the Y register. The instruction LDA (LET), Y loads the A register with the contents of the location pointed to by LET offset by the contents of the Y register ($4).

Leaving the start of the program shows that LET contains the address of LETTER ($0200).

So location $0204 contains the low-order byte of CHARLY, the Morse for the letter 'C' ($74). The next byte, Y=5 ($0205), contains the high-order byte ($02). Those two bytes are transferred into the locations STARTC and STARTC+1, employing the 'zero-page' X addressing mode to store the bytes. The code starts at label C100. STOPC is loaded with the next two bytes ($0206 and $0207) containing the address of DELTA ($0278).

Using this scheme, if STARTC is loaded with the beginning address of one character, then STOPC is loaded with the start address of the next, irrespective of the length of the Morse code.

Digits are handled in essentially the same way, except that zero (0,$30) is subtracted from the initial contents of the A register, and the addresses loaded into STARTC and STOPC are those offset from DIGIT - the address of which is stored in DIG.

Procedural and punctuation characters are handled by testing for each in turn, the code from label CS to label C15. Whenever such a symbol is located the Y register is loaded with the relevant offset from SYMBOL, whose address is stored in SYM. If the character was not found at all, STARTC is loaded with the ERROR character, eight dots ''''.''

**Sound label**

By the time the program reaches the label SOUND, STARTC contains a pointer to the first dot or dash of one of the Morse characters LDA (STARTC), Y with zero in Y loads either a dot or a dash into the A register. If it is a dot, the subroutine DOT is called; otherwise DASH is called.

Instead of adding one to Y the next dot or dash, a full 16-bit increment by one is performed on STARTC. All 16 bits of STARTC are compared with STOPC; if they are equal, the subroutine exits. If they are not, the new value in STARTC - modified by the zero in the Y register - points to the next dot or dash. Subroutine DELAY ($00B0) is called by both DOT and DASH. It uses one of the internal timers provided on the Kim board. DELAY will delay a period of time corresponding to one dot; it will be called three times for a dash. During a dot or dash the microprocessor has to produce a tone, which will appear on the applications port PAO.

On PA1 an on/off signal provides the capability to modulate a transmitter or external oscillator using a relay or transistor switch, in place of the Morse key. DELAY is used for sounding the dots and dashes as well as the silent space periods; it has to act as an oscillator during the sounded dots and dashes but it must also be muted during the silent periods.

(continued on next page)
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spaces and lost characters if the next is typed before the last one is finished.

The third program CHATER ($0038) sounds Morse characters at random. It could be used for Morse code receiving practice. Part of the Post Office Morse test for radio amateurs requires candidates to transcribe 36 words in three minutes and 10 five-digit groups in one-and-a-half minutes; four errors in the words or two in the number test will result in failure.

A random code generator would not represent a fair practice medium for the test but could assist the beginner with individual character recognition.

A pseudo-random number generator ($007A) places the next 'random' number in a series into location RND ($000F). The series is obtained by multiplying a seed - in RND, which holds the last 'random' number - by 13. All but the bottom eight bits are then discarded and the result is incremented by one. Any integer can be multiplied by a constant in this way.

This program will sound any of the first 48 characters of the defined Morse set. A 'random' number in the range 0 to 47 is obtained by calling RANDOM and anding off the top three bits in RND, to produce a number in the range 0 to 31. RANDOM is called again and this time the top four bits are cleared, leaving a number in the range zero to 15.

Adding together these two numbers results in one in the desired range; Y is loaded with this number multiplied by two. This is then used as the offset from LETTER, loading STARTC and STOPC as before. Subroutine SOUND, which is part of CHAR, does that and INTER forms the required inter-character delay.

Three no-operation instructions are placed at $0062 but they could be replaced by a JSR PRINT routine call. PRINT would print-out the character just (continued on next page).

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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>repeat misunderstood transmission)</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>36</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>39</td>
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<td>.</td>
<td>2E</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>,</td>
<td>3A</td>
<td>(apostrophe)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>:</td>
<td>3F</td>
<td>(oblique)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>(open bracket)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>2D</td>
<td>(close bracket)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>=</td>
<td>2F</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>(</td>
<td>28</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>)</td>
<td>29</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: ASCII characters with hexadecimal and Morse equivalents.
Computabits

All the programs are designed to be exited from by use of the RESET key. If you are a Morse code user it is possible that the four demonstration programs STRING, KEYBD, CHATER and ALTERN will not match your requirements exactly; but CHAR, INIT, RANDOM, DOT, DASH, DELAY and INTER are all complete routines and could be embedded in a program of your own construction in a vast number of ways.

Sorting large files

A BUBBLE sort requires all data to be held in the internal store. This is feasible with small quantities of data but with large files it may be impossible (insufficient storage space) or expensive (reduction in the number of programs running to provide space).

On minis and mainframe computers a different sorting technique is used; it util-
ses three or more files including the one

holding the source data.

Some microcomputers are not able to

access so many files at the same time but

if two are available, one for input and the other for output, sorting of large files is possible, though it may be somewhat slow.

The example given used a bubble sort

with a 100-element array to form the work area. The data is taken in small quantities from one file, sorted and output to the second file.

The data on the output file is in small

sorted sets and if the output data is sorted a second time, the result would be no different from the first. That is because the work area is of a fixed size.

To overcome the problem, the data has to be sorted using work areas of different sizes. When the data is being transferred from file A to file B, the work area is set at the maximum size 100; when the data is passing from B to A, the work area is varied between 61 and 69.

The work area is allowed to vary to avoid the possibility of the program getting into a loop which cannot be broken. Consider the problem where the work areas are set at 100 and 60. Any file having more than 600 items would be in

sorted in order up to the 600th and another sorted sequence would start from the 601st.

As the program stops only when the whole file is in sorted order - and it never

will get into sorted order - the program will run indefinitely.

When the program listed is running, the user is informed as to which direction the data is being passed by the symbols:

A B Input A, Output B
A B Input B, Output A

This example uses a file of more than 300 items:

RUN
A B
END OF RUN, SORTED DATA ON FILE B
READY

This printout is for the following file, unsorted on the left and sorted on the right:

TAKE IN PRINTOUT 3 HERE TAKE IN PRINTOUT 1 HERE

The records comprise Part Number (characters 1-9), Price (10-15), and quantity (16-20). The word END is used to indicate the end of the data.

Fixed format

To use the sort on records, the data has to be assembled as fixed format. This means that data has to be in a specific place and of a specific type - alphabetic or integer, for example and length.

It is not too difficult to alter the program so that a user can enter the name of the file to be sorted or reduce the working areas if space is limited. A further article will show how data can be sorted internally using a linked list.

Silly Basic

We found this stuck in a cracker left over from an April 1 party which never happened. Take an aspirin before en-
tering:

Teensy Basic for MK14

1) In BCD Arithmetic
2) Variety of Diagnostics
3) Fully protected System - requires logon password

You should be able to use this on your MK14.

How to use Teensy Basic:

(1) Enter the following program into memory.

(2) Run the program from OF12.

You are now set to enter your first Basic program.

The display will now show "Ready".

To log on to the terminal, press any key for exactly 23.5679 ms. This prevents any unauthorized person using your Basic programs.

If you should lose a key accidentally, e.g., 23.5679ms, the display will show "Error" and you can retry after pressing "GO" ready programming.

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Tel: 01-4520490.

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PRACTICAL COMPUTING July 1979

Circle No. 244

Circle No. 243
THE BUYER'S GUIDE is a summary of low-cost computers available in this country. It appears each month; we add new computers and amend existing information as required to keep up-to-date. The cut-off point is taken as £5,000, because we feel that computer systems costing more than that for a minimum configuration cannot be summarised adequately in a brief table. Systems are listed by manufacturer.

If a computer has been reviewed by Practical Computing, the date of the appropriate issue is indicated.

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**MANUFACTURER** | **HARDWARE/SOFTWARE & APPLICATIONS/AVAILABILITY** | **PRICE**
---|---|---
**ACORN COMPUTERS** | Acorn. Single Eurocard-sized microcomputer with 6502 processor, 1KB RAM, 16-way i/O. Max size: a second Eurocard adds keypad and CRTC cassette interface. Monitor and machine-code programming now, Basic and disc operating system in the future. "Highly cost-effective basis for a computer or an industrial development system". Sold by post or from Microdigital (051-236 0707). | £70.20 inc VAT and postage for kit. £81 complete for assembled Acorn.
**APPLE COMPUTERS** | Apple II. Min size: 16K memory; 8K ROM; keyboard; monitors; mini assembler; colour graphics; Pal card; RF modulator; games; paddles and speakers; 4 demo cassettes. Max size: Expandable to 48K memory; floppy discs and printers are now available. Two versions of Basic, PASCAL, Assembler, games; business packages. An American system regarded as suitable for any kind of applications. Maintenance contracts offered. Pet is not well known in this country. | Around £1,000
**ATTACHE** | Attache. Min size: system with 10 slots, S100 bus, 8080 processor and 1KB floppy housed in desk-top case with built-in keyboard. Max size: 64KB, parallel printer interface, two single- or double-density 8in. floppies, video screen. Disc Basic; business applications produced by Moncoland, the sole U.K. agent. Distributors include Keen, GBH, Alba, and Lion. | From £1,737 without video or external storage. Full business system with disc, screens and printer about £5,000.
**BRUTECH ELECTRONICS** | BEM-CPU: Single-board processor with 6502 and no RAM. No applications software. Available from Data Precision Equipment (04862 67420). (Reviewed March, 1979.) | From £116
**COMART** | Microbox. Chassis with three to six PCB sockets for S100 boards, plus fan. Several S100 boards available. Aimed mainly at OEM industrial users and perhaps the serious hobbyist. It will take Cromemco, North Star and other processors. Available from Comart (04860 21050). | £255 for full package plus case
**COMMODORE SYSTEMS DIVISION** | Pet. Single unit containing screen, tape cassette and keyboard. Floppy disc, printer and full-size keyboard are options, as are external cassettes. Basic; games; business packages. The British subsidiary of Commodore Systems of the U.S. sells Pet for home, educational and small business applications. About 80 distributors. | £460-£795 exc VAT
**COMPELEC** | Attache. Min size: system with 10 slots, S100 bus, 8080 processor and 1KB floppy housed in desk-top case with built-in keyboard. Max size: 64KB, parallel printer interface, two single- or double-density 8in. floppies, video screen. Disc Basic; business applications produced by Moncoland, the sole U.K. agent. Distributors include Keen, GBH, Alba, and Lion. | From £1,737 without video or external storage. Full business system with disc, screens and printer about £5,000.
**COMPUTER CENTRE** | Series 1. I.80 processor 512MB floppy, 32KB, Centronics printer, VDU. Up to 4MB disc and 64KB, CP/M, Basic, Cobol, PASCAL, Fortran IV, Assembler, Business and word processing packages available. From Compelec (01-580 6296), which is also sole supplier of Altair systems. | Less than £5,000 for basic system
**COMPECTOR** | Commodore II. Packaged system including 13in. eight-colour display with alphanumeric and graphics, 72-key detachable keyboard, 8KB, and built-in floppy. Max size: 32KB. Extended disc Basic in ROM, graphics programs and games. The system now ranks fourth behind Pet, TRS-80 and Apple in personal computer sales. Abscus (01-580 8841) is sole U.K. agent and is arranging distributors, including the Byte Shop and Transam. (Reviewed June, 1979.) | From £1,390
**COMPUCORP** | 616: desk-top unit using Z-80 and incorporating screen, 150KB floppy, 48KB. Up to 60KB memory, four floppies, printers, Basic, Assembler, DOS, text editor, file manager; business packages. Nine dealers. | From £3,890
**COMPUTER WORKSHOP** | Minikit: Z-80 CPU, CRT, UNIX, serial and parallel I/O. 16 bytes memory. Western Digital disc controller, 5A400 8in. drive plus CP/M, cables and connectors. | Mini kit: £786.
**CROMEMCO** | Single-card computer. 4MHz Z-80 CPU, 100 bus, 1KB RAM, sockets for 80K ROM, 20mA/ RS232 serial interface and parallel bi-directional interface. Basic in ROM and Z-80 monitor. For OEM and industrial users; used with backplane for "full computer capability". Comart is the sole agent and has 12 distributors. (Reviewed February, 1979.) | £247-£281

---

(continued on page 127)
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PET 2001-8 8K Bytes of Memory £550-00
PET 2001-32 32 Bytes Memory £795-00
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Bi-directional IEEE to RS232 interface £160-00
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CHURCHGATE STREET,
OLD HARLOW,
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<th>HARDWARE/SOFTWARE &amp; APPLICATIONS/APPLICATIONS</th>
<th>PRICE</th>
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<tr>
<td>CREMOCO</td>
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<tr>
<td>2-2: Min size: chassis, 30A power supply, motherboard, Z-80 processor, 16K memory. Max size: 512KB, 21 sockets, three minifloppies or four 8in. floppies. Basic, Fortran, Cobol, assemblers. For serious hobbyists, OMs, educational applications, and industrial/scientific users.</td>
<td>£372 (kit in form) to more than £4,000 per</td>
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<td>System Two: Min size: factory-assembled system with 32KB, dual 90K minifloppies, dual printer interface, serial interface. Max size: two additional floppies, 512KB, up to seven terminals. CP/M-compatible operating system (DCOS), Fortran, Cobol, Basic, assemblers, word processing, database manager. Multi-user system for software development, or industrial/business users.</td>
<td>£2,284 upwards</td>
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<td>System Two/64: New configuration featuring mini-diskettes and 64K byte software. And application as System Two.</td>
<td>£3,050</td>
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<td>System Three: Min size: 32KB, dual 256KB floppies, dual printer interface, 20mA/RS232 serial interface, Z-80 processor. Max size: two additional discs, 12KB, seven terminals, multi-channel A/D and D/A interface, PROM programmer. Software as for System Two. Described as appropriate for small to medium business, scientific and industrial users—&quot;rivals minicomputers at more than twice the price&quot;.</td>
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<td>System Three/64: New configuration featuring dual 8in. diskette drives; Z-80A processor; 64K of 4MHz memory; console and printer interfaces. Macro Assembler, Fortran IV, Extended Basic, Cobol, Multi-user Basic.</td>
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<td>EQUINOX</td>
<td>Equinox 300. Min size: 48K memory; dual floppy discs giving 600K bytes of storage; 16-bit Western Digital m.p.u. Max size: up to 256K memory; up to four 10MB hard discs. Basic, Lisp, PASCAL, Macro Assembler, Text Processor. All software bundled. The system is a multi-user, multi-tasking, time-sharing system for two to 12 users. Application software available for general commercial users. Sole distributors Equinox Computers Ltd (01-739 2367).</td>
<td>£5,000—£40,000 plus</td>
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<td>EXIDY</td>
<td>Sorcerer: based on Z-80. 16K and 32K; cartridge and cassette interfaces; 79-key keyboard; 256-character set (128 graphics symbols), 12in. video monitor; expandable with Micropolis floppy discs. Basic, Assembler and Editor; games, word processor. Other pre-packaged programs plus EPROM pack for your own programs on cartridges. There is no sole importer for U.K.; sold through various importers and dealers. (Reviewed March, 1979.)</td>
<td>£760 for 16K, £858 for 32K (excludes video monitor); £1,200 with floppy discs.</td>
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<td>HEWART MICROELECTRONICS</td>
<td>Mini 6800 Mk II. IK monitor; IK user RAM, IK VDU RAM; CUTS. Upper- and lower-case VDU with graphics option. 128-byte scratchpad; decoder/buffer; power supply Basic in ROM. Monitor command summary, SWTFC PV; monitors; Newdor 6800); Sclbi 6800 Cookbook. Markets are small businesses, education and home user. Cash with order to Hewart. (0622) 22030.</td>
<td>From £127.50 plus VAT</td>
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<td>6800S. 16K dynamic RAM. IK Mikbug-compatible monitor, room for 8K Basic in ROM; upper- and lower-case graphics; single floppy disc drive; printer and high-speed tape interfaces. &quot;Mountains of software available&quot;. Test tape with CUTS test tones, test message and games with kit.</td>
<td>From £275 plus VAT.</td>
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<td>DIGITAL MICROSYSTEMS</td>
<td>DISC-2. Min size: 32KB, but 64K standard; Z-80: over IMB floppy disc on two single-sided 8in. drives; four programmable RS232 and one parallel interface. CP/M and Basic included in price. Extended Basic, Fortran, Cobol, text processing. Macro Assembler, Link Loader, business packages and CAP-CPP business software. Add-on rigid disc system (14 and 2MB) available soon. Modata (0892 395911) is sole U.K. distributor; dealers being appointed.</td>
<td>£4,468.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMSAI</td>
<td>VDP 40: 32K or 64K RAM memory 8in. display screen, standard keyboard. Two 8in. floppy disc drives; serial I/O. No software support, but packages for the larger VDP-80 could be converted for smaller system. This would be from about £700 per package. Computer Mart, Norwich (0603 615089), is the main U.K. supplier but there are other distributors.</td>
<td>£4,507 for 32K model.</td>
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<td>MICRONICS</td>
<td>Micros. Typical size: IK monitor; 47-key solid state keyboard; interfaces for video, cassette, printer and UHF TV; serial I/O, dual parallel I/O ports; 2K RAM; power supply. 2K Basic; British-designed and manufactured system. Claimed to be the cheapest data terminal—a system with an acoustic coupler and VDU for £1,020. Prospective applications for small businesses, process controllers and hobbyists. Manufacturer is sole distributor (01-892 7044).</td>
<td>From £400, assembled.</td>
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<td>MICRO V</td>
<td>Microstar. Single box with twin 8in. floppy discs, 64K RAM, three RS232 serial inputs, STARDIS operating system enables system to have three VDUs, plus a fourth job running simultaneously. Word processing software available. Packages being developed include invoicing system, payroll, accounting-type system. Price includes a reporter generator language. Imported by a Data Efficiency subsidiary, Microsense Computers; Microsolve is London agent; other distributors being arranged.</td>
<td>£4,950 or machine and software.</td>
</tr>
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<td>MIDWEST SCIENTIFIC INSTRUMENTS</td>
<td>MSI 6800. Min size: 16K memory Act I Terminal; cassette interface. Max size: three disc systems—minifloppy system with triple drives of 80 bytes each and 22K memory, large floppy system with up to four 312K-byte disc and 56K of memory mounted in a pedestal desk, or hard disc system with 10MB and 56K. Basic interpreter and compiler; editor; assembler; text processor on small disc system. American-designed system being manufactured increasingly in the U.K. Sole U.K. agent is a Strumech (SEED) (0643 4321) but a distributor network is being established.</td>
<td>Basic system: £1,100 (£185 as kit); Minidisc, £2,900; Large floppy disc, £3,200, plus £1,400 for quad system; hard disc, £8,000—£12,000.</td>
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<td>NASCOM</td>
<td>Nascom I. Min size: CPU, 2K memory; parallel I/O; serial data interface, IK monitor in EPROM. Max size: CPU, 64K memory; up to 16 parallel I/O ports. Mostly games, but also a dedicated text editor system written by ICL Datasilk. Nascom is working on large versions of Basic, and 8K Microsoft Basic should be available soon. Eleven distributors in U.K. Nascom is negotiating to increase the number. (Reviewed January, 1979.)</td>
<td>£165 exc. VAT.</td>
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Circle No. 247
### NATIONAL MULTIPLEX

**Pegasus**. Min size: 48K; Z-80; double-density floppy disc drives (320KB); S100 bus; 12-in. CRT; 58-key keyboard; two serial and one parallel interfaces; bi-directional printer. Options: 8-in. drives; 17MB additional drives; digital recorder, 9,600 baud. Assembler, Cobol, Fortran, BASIC, FORTRAN, ALGOL, Pilot, DCL, COBOL. Suitable for education, business and home users. London Computer Store (01-388 5721) sole supplier. **PRICE**: £2,790 excl. VAT.

### NETRONICS

**Elf II**: single-board computer in kit form or assembled. RCA Cosmac 1802 processor, hex keyboard and 256-byte RAM; options include up to 64KB, ASCII keyboard, cassette and RS232 serial I/O, and video output. Machine code or Tiny BASIC. Promoted as a teaching system in minimal form, but expandable for more general use. Sole U.K. distributor HL Audio (01-739 1922). **PRICE**: Basic kit £165; inc VAT, CAD, power supply. Assembled plus user manuals, £164-10. I/O board adds £40-96; Basic is £14-99.

### NEWBRAIN

**776B**. CPU board, 4K memory, cassette and VDU interfaces. Range of Basics and games. British-manufactured system for hobbyists. Expandable to 64K memory, available only in kit form. From Newbrain; also from Bearbrain dealers, Microdigital, Microbits. **PRICE**: From £45.

### NORTH STAR

**Horizon**. Min size: 16K memory; Z-80A processor, single minifloppy disc drive (180KB). Max size: 56K memory, four minifloppy disc drives (180KB), any acceptable S100 peripheral boards. Basic (including random and sequential access), disc operating system and monitor. Options: Basic Compiler, Fortran, Cobol, Pilot, PASCAL and ISAM. The system is suitable for commercial, educational and scientific applications. Application software for general commercial users. Twenty distributors. (Reviewed April, 1979.) **PRICE**: £995 to £2,500.

### OHIO SCIENTIFIC

**Ohio Superboard II**: Min size: 6502 processor, 8K Basic In ROM; 2K monitor in ROM. Max size: 4MB RAM, 4096-byte Basic in ROM; Assamblers/Interpreters. **PRICE**: From £298.

**Challenger C24P**: similar to Superboard but with a 32 x 64 character set. Supplied as two separate boards with open slots for expansion. The "professional portable"; similar to Superboard but packaged and ready to use. Aimed at small business, education, research. **PRICE**: £620 to £1,195.

**Challenger C28P**: similar to 4P but expandable to include two 8-in. floppy drives, allowing use of Ohio software. Personal computers for larger business/commercial/educational programs. Aimed at hobbyist/small business. Ohio makes games, personal maths tutors, and business programs. This and other Ohio products have six U.K. distributors. (Reviewed June, 1979.) **PRICE**: £925-£2,670.


### PERTEC

**System 1390**. Min size: 32K memory; dual minifloppy discs 71 bytes each, formatted; serial interfaces. Max size: 64K memory; four serial ports. Basic (single and multi-user). From manufacture (01-580 3290) and systems houses. **PRICE**: £3,000-£5,500.

**Fortran, Cobol. The hardware for Compelec Altair systems is from Pertec but the software is Anglo-Dutch. Sole distributor Compelec (01-580 3290).**

### PROCESSOR TECHNOLOGY

**Sok P. 808-based S100 microcomputer packaged with cassette and video interfaces (including graphics), keyboard with numeric pad, and 16KB RAM. BASIC, assembler, word processors. Floppy disc systems available. Several distributors including Comart (0480 219008), which can offer nationwide maintenance contracts. (Reviewed, July, 1979.)**

### RAIR

**Black Box Min. size: 32K memory dual minifloppy discs, 80K bytes each; two programmable serial I/O interfaces. Max size: 56K memory; eight serial interfaces; IMB disc storage (or 10MB hard disc); range of peripherals. BASIC, Fortran IV; COBOL. The hardware for Compelec Altair systems is from Pertec but the software is Anglo-Dutch. Sole distributor Compelec (01-580 3290).**

### RESEARCH MACHINES LTD

**380-Z**. Min size: 4K memory; 380-Z processor, keyboard. Max size: 64K memory. Options: cassette, single or dual minifloppy discs, dual 8-in. double-sided discs (IMB); serial interfaces; parallel interfaces; analogue interface; printer available. Basic Interpreter, Z-80 Assembler, interactive text editor, terminal mode software, data logging routines, CP/M, DOS, text processor, C Basic. Fortran, Algol, Pilot, Cobol, CP/M users' club library. Sold principally to higher and secondary education, and for scientific research, data processing and data logging. Available from Sintel and the manufacturer. (Reviewed December, 1978.) **PRICE**: From £380-£3,500.

**280-Z**. Board version of 380-Z system. 4K or 32K (identical in performance to the 380-2). Interfaces, software as for 380-Z. **PRICE**: 4KB version at £398; 32KB for £722.

### RCA

**Elf II**: RCA 1802 micro with hex keypad and output to TV screen. Assembler and machine code programming; options include Tiny Basic. Available by mail order from HL Audio (01-739 1529). **PRICE**: From £99.85 in kit form; £164-10 including postage and VAT.

### ROCKWELL

**Aim-65**: Kim-compatible with full keyboard and on-board printer. IK or 4K RAM. The 4K version is described as a development system rather than a personal computer. Assembler, editor, BASIC. Available from Pelco and Microdigital. (Reviewed July, 1979.) **PRICE**: IK = £2.49-50. 4K = £3.15.

### SCIENCE OF CAMBRIDGE

**MK14**: SC/MP processor, 256 bytes user memory; 512-byte PROM with monitor program; hex keyboard and eight-digit, seven-segment display; interface circuitry; 5V regulator on board. To this can be added: JR RAM (£360); 16I/O chip (£780); cassette interface kit (£59); cassette interface and replacement monitor (£795); PROM programmer (£395). No software provided but a 100-page manual includes a number which will fit into 256 bytes covering monitors, maths, electronics systems, music and miscellaneous. Based on American National Semiconductor chips. Science will soon have a VDU interface and large manual on user programming. Mail order from manufacturer (0223 312919) and by selected dealers. (Reviewed May, 1979.) **PRICE**: £399.5 basic.
### Buyers' Guide

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<td>SORD</td>
<td><strong>M100.</strong> Min. size: 16K RAM; 4K ROM monitor; full keyboard plus function keypad; two-channel joystick dual cassette I/F; Iik EBasic on cassette; video; graphics; printer; 5100 bits; converters; speaker; 24-hour clock. Max size: 48K RAM; 8K ROM; black and white or colour graphics; mini-floppy discs. Suitable for OEMs, small business, education, laboratory and scientific and home computing. Main distributor is Dectroede, but for London and South contact Midas Computer Services (0903) B14523.** From £726</td>
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<td><strong>Min size: 64K RAM; hardware as M222 plus one or two 350K byte minifloppy drives. Max size: Four 350K minifloppies; up to four 11.4Mb hard discs; range of 101 devices. As M222 plus Cobol-80, CAP-CPP BOS MicroCobol. Application software includes word and graphics processor; personal information processing system; games; CAP-CPP range of MicroCobol software.</strong> From £3,775-£4,448</td>
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A PRACTICAL GLOSSARY

Continuing the terminological gamut from I to M

Interface
A word much-loved by the jargon writers, an interface is the boundary between two systems. It is practically anything from an airy concept to a piece of very solid hardware.

On the one hand it is possible, and even sometimes helpful, to think of the man-machine interface as residing somewhere in the brain of the human, who perceives what is happening and who decides to interact with the machines.

On the other hand, it is generally more useful to think of an interface as a plug, a socket, or a cable; or all three. The interface between a cassette player and a microcomputer is the connection between them; the connection which passes information or data from one to the other.

Programs can have interfaces, too, which is where the 'logical' bit comes in; they aren't solid, physical interfaces, but those parts of a program which can pass information or data to other programs. And so on.

The crucial aspect of interfaces is that they should be well-defined, wherever or whatever they are; so both sides of the connection should know what to expect, and so that information can be passed satisfactorily from one to the other.

Take the CCITT V24 standard, also known as the EIA RS232-C specification. This is a well-accepted standard for connecting things physically; it defines which wires go to which pins in a plug-and-socket connection, and effectively it defines the shapes of the plug.

It is widely used and most terminals and printers offer a V24 connection; even so, there is plenty of room for variety and many terminals require you to juggle the wires around before the plug is satisfactorily into the socket.

IS
Conventional abbreviation for index sequential (qv).

Label
Like the literal descriptive definition, it's a descriptive identifier. Typically a label is a group of characters used to identify a file, a message or a record; very specifically, the term also denotes an instruction in a program.

Some programming languages allow you to reference a label rather than an absolute address or a particular line number; so instead of a branch instruction like GOTO 40, where 40 is a line number, you might be allowed to say GOTO SUBROUTINE "B".

Language
This one's tricky. Between them Wittgenstein and Chomsky had some difficulty composing a simple definition. Still, it's obvious that the essential element in communication; and in computing, a programming language is a code or a defined set of symbols or a notation or a systematic means of communication — whereby humans can communicate with computers.

The analogy with human languages is very good. There is no point in using Swahili to a Pathan if the Indian doesn't know the language. Speaking in Swahili to someone who knows that language is a good way to impart information. In fact, the only simple way for two people to pass information is by agreeing, probably implicitly, on what a set of written squiggles or spoken grunts means.

So it is with computers. Basic and Cobol and the rest are alternative ways of expressing information; if you and the computer both 'know' one of them, you can write a program which will run on that computer.

With a definition like this, it should be said that languages are in several varieties. There are three — machine code, assemblers, and high-level languages. All are being defined as we go, but briefly machine code relates directly to how the computer processes instructions, so normally it consists of a binary code, a string of 0s and 1s which will be meaningless to anyone who doesn't know this is a code the computer can understand.

Assembler is one step up, coding the binary instructions into more or less meaningful alphanumeric symbols but it's still related directly to the way a particular computer operates.

High-level languages are distant one step further from the inside of the processor; the instructions usually bear some resemblance to English but, more important, the high-level language can, in theory, run on more than one computer. In practice, for each computer there's a different translator which converts the high-level language into machine code.

Latency
It is just possible you might meet this word. It refers to a delay or a waiting state in the middle of some operation. You might encounter it among the fine print of a floppy disc manual — it's the delay while the read/write head is moving, plus the time the disc takes to rotate to the required data position. In other words, nothing happens during latency but something is about to happen.

LCD
Liquid crystal display. Some crystals are liquid, and some liquid crystals light if you tickle them with a burst of electricity. LCDs are used in pocket calculators and digital watches, normally as an alternative to LED displays.

The technology is, and if you need high-quality transmission, you're at least 15,000 of his letters around — and philosophy.

Library
A collection of program subroutines to insert in programs or data files.

Light pen
A photo-electric device which can detect the presence of light at a particular point on a CRT display screen. It looks like a pen but it's connected by cable to a controller. You point it at the place on the screen you want to reference; the controller detects where you are. Depending on the programming, the computer could then modify the display or perhaps accept something as input data.

Line
It's a connection, usually a cable, between one part of the system and another — like screen and keyboard — or one computer and another. See line speed.

Line feed
The command which moves the printer up one line; on a display screen then

(continued on page 133)
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PRACTICAL COMPUTING July 1979
This Airamco Acorn Computers is faster and more complicated, so which prints one character at a time printer is a printer which utilises equations, follow mathematical logic, and essentially calculates functions, and so on. The data rate, which is specified data, especially if the data in the form of lists, can reliably be sent means the maximum rate at which data can be transferred. The term logic relates things together — and on the formal bit — logic doesn't necessarily have any relationship to physical matters like a hardware organisation. In practice, and in microcomputers, logic means the circuitry which performs logical functions, and since much microcircuitry does this, the term 'logic' is applied loosely to any of its circuitry. Loops are mathematical; they utilise

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</tbody>
</table>

PRACTICAL COMPUTING July 1979

(continued from page 131)
INTERESTED IN HOME COMPUTING?

Start now and don’t get left behind! THE NASCOM 1 is here. Ex-stock with full technical services.

Plus the opportunity to join the fastest moving club of personal computer users enabling you to get the most out of your computer. You can OBTAIN and EXCHANGE programs and other software – many now available.

The Powerful Z80 Microprocessor

Free B Bug valued at £23.00

plus 10 x C12 cassettes valued at £4.00

plus Standard Modulator valued at £2.25

WITH EVERY NASCOM

£219 + VAT

RELEASED END OF JUNE 1979.

SEND £10 DEPOSIT TO RESERVE

OHIO SUPERBOARD II NEW FIRST IN UK

For electronic buffs. Fully assembled and tested. Requires 5V at 3 Amps and a video monitor or TV with RF converter to be up and running.

STANDARD FEATURES

- Uses the ultra powerful 6502 microprocessor
- In-System Monitor Facility
- Full feature BASIC runs faster than currently available personal computers and all 8080-based business computers.
- 4K static RAM on board expandable to 8K
- Full SIO interface with mouse connection and user programmability
- Kansas City standard audio cassette interface for high reliability

NEW LOW PRICE

£165 + VAT

Please phone to check availability or send £10 to reserve one and pay the balance on delivery.

NASCOM IMMEDIATE EXPANSION S100 from COMP

- strongly recommended

The only available S100 motherboard kit (fully buffered) that plugs directly into your Nascom. Designed for the insertion of S100 boards (e.g. Static RAM, EPROM and discs etc.).

S100 Motherboard/Buffer £47.50

Motherboard comes complete with 2K Tiny Basic On cassette.

Nascom Vero Case £22.50

Nascom Music Box Kit £9.90

Nascom Joy Stick Kit £14.90

Suitable 8K Static RAM Memory £110 (fully assembled and tested)

NASCOM LOW COST EXPANSION

Uses dynamic RAM and NASBUS

(please note this expansion does not support S100 memory)

8K Dynamic RAM board (in kit only) £85.00

Motherboard (in kit only) £12.50

Buffer board (in kit only) £25.00

SHORT C12 CASSETTES

FOR COMPUTER PROGRAMMES

SPECIAL DYNAMIC MEMORY OFFER

£69 + VAT

Delivery charged at cost — Red Star — Securicor — Post etc. Your choice. Please make cheques payable to COMP, and phone your order quoting BARCLAYCARD or ACCESS number.

OPEN — 10am to 7pm — Monday to Saturday

CONTINUOUS DEMONSTRATIONS

375 PRACTICAL COMPUTING July 1979
JUST COMPARE OUR CASH AND CARRY PRICES!

THE TRS-80 (SPECIAL SCOOP)
Low Priced, Ready to Go!

Level-II with 4K RAM
Improved graphics, print formatting, and a faster cassette transfer rate are features of Level-II BASIC.

Level-II with 16K RAM
A combination of 16K RAM and the powerful Level-II BASIC produces a system capable of handling most demands.

FREE 100 PROGRAMS

KEY BOARD ONLY COMPLETE WITH UHF MODULATOR

UK POWER SUPPLY — £9.90 + VAT

ATTENTION! SAVE £90
TRS 80 & APPLE II USERS
16K UP HALF NORMAL £99
GRADE KIT PRICE + VAT LIFETIME GUARANTEE

NEW Standard QWERTY Keyboard with 16K Memory

8K PET still at unbeatable price of £499 + VAT

THE EXIDY SORCERER.

EXIDY SORCERER 32 RAM COMPUTER £790 VAT

FOR TECHNICAL AND SALES LITERATURE SEND SAE TO:
COMP COMPUTER COMPONENTS (Exidy UK Sales),
Freepost, 14 Station Road, New Barnet, Herts.
Tel: 01-441 2922 (Sales) 01-449 6596 TeleX: 298755

FOR TASTEFUL AND SALES LITERATURE SEND SAE TO:
COMP COMPUTER COMPONENTS (Exidy UK Sales),
Freepost, 14 Station Road, New Barnet, Herts.
Tel: 01-441 2922 (Sales) 01-449 6596 TeleX: 298755

NEW! THE ITT APPLE (2020)

EX STOCK 4K LOW PRICE MEMORY UPGRADE PURCHASED AT TIME OF ORDER

* Full colour - OHF output * Audio cassette tape interface * Up to 4K RAM on board * BASIC in ROM (graphics commands include COLOUR = VLM, HLM, PLOT and SCRN) * Built in Loudspeaker * Buckets of software already available * disk system (110 K byte per drive) includes controller only £425 + VAT

BOOK SHELF

FOR TECHNICAL AND SALES LITERATURE SEND SAE TO:
COMP COMPUTER COMPONENTS (Exidy UK Sales),
Freepost, 14 Station Road, New Barnet, Herts.
Tel: 01-441 2922 (Sales) 01-449 6596 TeleX: 298755

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF OUR SHORT DELIVERY TIME.
All prices exclusive of VAT

Circle No. 309 135
CT-82 Terminal

The CT-82 has 128 different functions all of which are software controlled. Too numerous to list in their entirety they include 18 cursor control commands, 6 ways to configure the cursor, 11 erase functions and graphics capability including point-to-point plotting, field protection, printer pass through, paged edit mode and light pen position reading.

Computer Workshop
3rd Anniversary Offers

4K Memory board (Can be used with Motorola D2 kits as well as SWTPC) Kit £45.00 Ass. £50.00
Tubes of 25 x 2102-L RAM £20.00
6575 Character Generator £4.00
Set of 20 male and female Molex 10 way connectors £6.00
MP-A processor board containing 6800 MICBUG system, clock and 128 byte scratchpad RAM Ass. £50.00

All prices include postage, packing and VAT.
All offers subject to availability. Please send cheque with order. Goods or full refund by return.

PR-40 Matrix Printer

This unit can be used with any computer with a parallel printer interface and may be ordered with a special interface for the PET system.

The PR-40 uses an 8 bit parallel interface, with data strobe and acknowledge.
This unit prints the 64 character upper case ASCII set on a 40 character line at a print speed of 55 lines per minute. It uses an impact dot matrix head and prints on standard adding machine paper. It is ideal for development work and applications where a 40 column report is sufficient.

PR-40A (25 way RS connector) £250 + VAT
PR-40P (PET connector) £250 + VAT

Southwest Technical Products Co.

Computer Workshop
38 DOVER STREET · LONDON · W1X 3RB · Telephone: 01-491 7507 · Telex: 268913

• Circle No. 310
Introduction

Our company is one of the first in the country set up to cater for the exciting new world of microcomputer.

We sell a wide range of computers, each selected for its value, ability and reliability, brief notes of each are included on the following pages.

Not only do we serve as a retail outlet for the machinery of the second industrial revolution but also we offer a myriad of other service to help you to decide which machine best fits your requirements, this is backed by providing a hire service which allows potential customers to try a machine before they buy it.

Secondly we sell the widest range of literature concerning microcomputers available in the U.K. today. The books are imported directly from the U.S. and our current range exceeds 250 titles. Magazines include all the U.K. magazines with as many back issues as possible held in stock. The best of the American Magazines are also available, the latest possible issues always being in stock.

On the hardware side we have the proven ability to design, manufacture, maintain and repair; likewise on the software side we have the proven ability to produce and maintain commercial application programs.

In addition to all the foregoing we also provide support with magnetic media, engineering tools, test equipment etc, etc.

All in all we try and provide the most competent service in the microcomputer industry.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

In addition to cash we accept Access, Barclaycard, Diners Club and cheques covered by a bankers card.

VAT in this brochure has been calculated at the rates of 8% and 12½% current at the time of writing. Please allow for any changes in the rates.

Postage and carriage is offered free of charge within the United Kingdom.

All products are covered by our 90 limited warranty against failure due to faulty materials or workmanship.

We offer an after sales service which is second to none, technical expertise is always available from our well informed staff and repairs are handled by our own service department at very competitive rates.

Terms are implemented at the discretion of management.
The Commodore Pet

A complete Computer for the price of a good typewriter! With a library of over 200 programs in business, science, education and entertainment costing as little as £1.25 each.

The Pet is made with Commodore’s own advanced technology to bring you the benefits of recent dramatic advances in microprocessor technology. Pet can store and retrieve data which conventionally occupies huge storage capacity, and solve numerical problems traditionally tedious and time consuming.

COMMERCIAL APPLICATIONS

The Commodore PET brings to the commercial user for the first time, a really cost effective business computer for use in payroll, stock control, amortization calculations, numerical analysis, etc.

FOR THE SCIENTIST AND ENGINEER

The PET has a comprehensive set of scientific functions designed for scientists and engineers. PET also has a built-in real time clock and is directly compatible with hundreds of instruments such as D.V.M.'s, dataloggers etc., enabling control of industrial plant and processes.

AS A TEACHING TOOL

As a teaching tool in computer programming and other fields, the PET has no equal in performance or cost. There is even a tutorial programme (Basic: Basic) available for £9.00 — use the PET to teach you how to program PET.

IN THE HOME

As well as being used for all the previous applications the PET computer is an extremely creative and instructive learning medium of the future for young and old alike. There are also large numbers of entertainment programs available including chess and space games.

EASE OF OPERATION

The Commodore PET comes complete with a built-in TV screen, keyboard and cassette deck as well as its full computer circuitry. It is plugged into any 13 amp mains and no special computer knowledge is needed for running standard programs. Personal programs can readily be written in the BASIC computer language of PET which is easily learnt.

AN EXPANDABLE SYSTEM

Further expansion is a prime design concept enabling PET to be made the heart of a much larger system incorporating printers, floppy discs etc., as and when required.

COMPUTERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMPUTERS</th>
<th>nett</th>
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<tr>
<td>PET 2001-4</td>
<td>460.00</td>
<td>36.80</td>
<td>496.80</td>
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<tr>
<td>Standard PET with integral cassette and calculator type keyboard. 4K bytes of memory.</td>
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<tr>
<td>PET 2001-8</td>
<td>580.00</td>
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<td>Standard PET with integral cassette and calculator type keyboard. 8K bytes of memory.</td>
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<td>PET 2001-16N</td>
<td>675.00</td>
<td>54.60</td>
<td>729.60</td>
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<td>PET with 16K bytes of memory and large keyboard. External cassette optional.</td>
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<td>PET 2001-32N</td>
<td>795.00</td>
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<td>PET with 32K bytes of memory and large keyboard. External cassette optional.</td>
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PRINTERS

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<tr>
<td>PET 2023</td>
<td>850.00</td>
<td>66.00</td>
<td>894.00</td>
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<td>80-column dot matrix printer. Plain paper printer with full PET graphics.</td>
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<tr>
<td>PET 2022</td>
<td>946.00</td>
<td>71.60</td>
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<tr>
<td>40-column dot matrix printer as above, with forms handling capability and tractor feed.</td>
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FLOPPY DISC

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<tr>
<td>PET 2040</td>
<td>740.00</td>
<td>57.20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dual drive intelligent mini-floppy system. 343K net user storage capacity.</td>
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EXTERNAL CASSETTE DECK

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KIM RANGE

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MANUALS (VAT free)

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<td>1.00</td>
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<td>PET Users Handbook</td>
<td>5.00</td>
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<td>5.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>6500 Programming Manual</td>
<td>5.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>6500 Hardware Manual</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>KIM Users Handbook</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strathclyde Basic Course Workbook (Without cassettes)</td>
<td>10.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>MISCELLANEOUS</td>
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PART EXCHANGE

Nascom 1 owners — We will give up to £165 in part exchange for a well built, working Nascom 1 against the cost of a Commodore Pet.
**inc. SORCERER**

EXIDY SORCERER is a complete and ready to use microcomputer, simply plug into a standard U.H.F. T.V. set and you are running in BASIC.

SORCERER is manufactured in America by EXIDY who have for the last five years been a leading manufacturer of microprocessor based T.V. games.

High quality materials are used throughout, and the SORCERER has proved to be a well constructed and reliable machine.

Subject of rave reviews, SORCERER offers far and away the best features of any machine in its class.

**FEATURES AS STANDARD**

In alphabetical order:

**BASIC**
SORCERER has 8K Microsoft BASIC, contained in a plug in "Rom Pak" which slots into a socket at the side of the SORCERER. Microsoft BASIC is a well tried and trusted version of BASIC used on a number of other machines besides SORCERER.

**CHARACTERS**
SORCERER has the full 128 character, upper and lower case standard ASCII, and also 64 useful predefined graphic characters.

**DISPLAY**
The video display on SORCERER is "memory mapped"; the characters displayed on the screen are a representation of a block of random access memory. This feature is very useful when working with graphics; 64 characters are displayed per line, and 200 lines can be displayed at once a total of 1,920 characters all seen at the same time.

**GRAPHICS**
This is an area in which SORCERER scores high marks in the computer ratings SORCERER has 128 graphic symbols which may be defined by the user on an 8 x 8 dot matrix. Any symbol may be defined such as a mathematical symbol, part of a larger picture made up of many such symbols, or even a Chinese letter! . . Yes your computer can even speak Chinese!

Each user defined character is formed by programming 8 bytes of memory and is assigned a key on the keyboard depending on where in the memory you place the 8 bytes of data. User defined graphics may be called up direct and is assigned a key on the keyboard depending on where in the memory you place the 8 bytes of data. User defined graphics may be called up direct from the keyboard or under program control.

**KEYBOARD**
SORCERER has a high quality keyboard with a light but positive "feel" to it. The keyboard consists of a 64 key, stepped, style keyboard with a 16 key numeric keypad to one side, the numeric keypad is very useful for programmes containing a great deal of number data.

**MEMORY EXPANSION**
The standard SORCERER unit has 8K of user Ram. The memory capacity may be expanded to 16K or 32K without any additional hardware save the chips themselves, further expansion is available via the S100 expansion unit which is an optional extra.

**MONITOR**
SORCERER has a power of 4K monitor in Rom. Facilities include: Memory display verification, input/output control (for instance you can link to user defined I/o routines), cassette file handling and creation of batch tapes, display/modification, Input/output control (for instance you can link to user defined I/o routines), cassette file handling and creation of batch tapes, memory block move and system diagnostics.

**PARALLEL INPUT/OUTPUT**
A DB 25 pin connector at the rear of SORCERER provides a parallel input/output port which can drive a Centronics printer or similar peripheral devices that require an eight bit parallel I/O port with full handshaking.

**ROM PAKS**
There are a unique feature of the SORCERER, the Rom Pak provided with the SORCERER contains 8K Microsoft BASIC in Rom, APL, FORTRAN, Pascal, Sperry's "APL2" in Rom Paks are in the pipeline also Eprom pak, Development Pak, and Word processing Pak will be available in the future. ROM Paks contain as much as 16K of read only memory.

**SERIAL INPUT/OUTPUT**
Standard RS232 serial output is available via another DB 25 connector at the rear of SORCERER, this socket also has connections for two cassette units furthermore the motors of these cassette units can be controlled by instructions contained in your programmes.

**S100 EXPANSION UNIT**
The S100 expansion unit is a self contained 6 slot chassis styled in the SORCERER fashion with interconnect cable and S100 interface. It serves to connect SORCERER to a standard bus structure enabling SORCERER to be connected to a multitude of peripheral devices including: Printers, floppy disk subsystems, A.C. power line switching, Music Synthesizer units, Speech Recognition systems, Speech synthesizer units, and many other exciting devices.

**TAPE INPUT/OUTPUT**
Facilities are provided on the SORCERER for connection to a standard commercial tape recorder. Just plug into the earphone and microphone sockets (leads provided) this gives you the ability to store and retrieve programmes you have written.

**VIDEO OUTPUT**
Just plug video connectors at the rear of the machine give both modulated and un-modulated video.
**Apple II Features**

- A fast powerful integer BASIC is built into Apple II. The built-in assembler, disassembler and monitor will be appreciated by advance programmers in search of more speed or flexibility than BASIC can provide.
- Fifteen core standard graphics in a 1,600 Point array for spectacular visual effects.
- High resolution graphics in a 5,400 point array for finely detailed displays.
- Loudpeadder and sound capabilities that bring programs to life.
- Four hand control inputs for games and other human input capabilities.
- Internal memory capacity of 40K Bytes of RAM, 12K Bytes of ROM.
- Big system performance in a small package.
- Eight expansion slots to plug in cards that give your Apple even more power.
- Support, easy to follow documentation, so even a total beginner can use the machine.
- Fast (1500 baud) cassette interface.
- Proper typewriter style keyboard.

**Apple II prices**

- With 16K of RAM
  - Nett: 955.00
  - Vat: 1063.80
- With 32K Bytes of RAM
  - Nett: 1185.00
  - Vat: 1329.76
- With 48K Bytes of RAM
  - Nett: 1305.00
  - Vat: 1409.40

**Applesoft II Floating Point BASIC**

An expanded version of Microsoft's popular floating point BASIC. Its 9 digit arithmetic and large format make it ideal for business and scientific programs. Applesoft II is supplied either with a cassette tape or a plug in ROM card. The tape version is supplied free with every Apple.

**Apple II ROM card**

- Nett: 110.00
- Vat: 8.80

**Floppy Disk Subsystem**

Gives your system immediate access to large quantities of data. The subsystem consists of an Intelligent Interface card, a powerful Disk Operating System and one or two mini floppy drives.

**Features**

- Storage capacity of 116 KiloBytes/diskette.
- Data transfer rate 156K Bits/second.
- Individual file write protection.
- Power directly from Apple II.
- Full disk capability with systems as little as 16K bytes of RAM.
- Fast access time - 500 m sec across 35 tracks.
- Powerful disk operating software.
- Load and store files by name.
- BASIC program chaining.

**Floppy disk subsystem**

- 425.00
- 34.00
- 459.00
- 2nd disk drive and connecting cable

**Parallel Printer Interface Card**

Allows you to connect almost any popular printer to your Apple. A BASIC program can produce hardcopy output as easily as it prints to the TV monitor screen. Command interpretation and printer control details are handled by the firmware built into the card, to eliminate user programming requirements.

**Communications Interface Card**

Allows your Apple to talk to another machine with other computers and terminals over ordinary telephone lines. Now you can load programs over the phone, send messages to remote terminals or access your office computer from the comfort of your home.

**High Speed Serial Interface Card**

Allows Apple to exchange data with printers, plotters and computers in serial format up to 19.2 K Baud.

**Speechlab Voice Recognition Card**

Allows the Apple to recognise a spoken vocabulary of up to 32 user-selected words. The computer can be programmed to perform any task desired upon recognition of a key word.

**Prototyping Card**

Provides the user with a means of building and testing circuitry for the Apple computer. The 2 x 7" double-sided board includes a hole pattern that accepts all conventional integrated circuits and passive components. Documentation includes a complete system bus description to aid the Interface designer.

**Carrying Case**

- Nett: 165.00
- Vat: 13.20

**Other Products**

Apple maintains a 6 to 12 months technology lead over the competition. There is not sufficient space to give full details of all that is available, but the following is a sample to whet your appetite.

- Light pen
- Real time clock
- Co-resident assembler on disk or tape
- Programming aid ROM
- Joyclicks
- PROM Burner

**Apple Hire**

The Apple hire is one of many machines from Microdigital (HP) Ltd. For details ring 301-227 2535.

**Lower case acceptor**

- Nett: 40.00
- VAT: 3.20
- Total: 43.20

**Part Exchange**

Pet owners, trade up to an Apple at MICRODIGITAL. We can allow up to £300 for your old PET against the cost of a new Apple II.
The most successful microcomputer in Europe, the Nascom 1 represents exceptional value for money.

MEMORY

The memory expansion board can carry 16 dynamic RAM chips, these can be either 4K or 16K bit chips and the board is offered with B, 16 or 32K bytes of RAM. The board allows for expansion to 32K by plugging in 8 more 4116 chips. The memory expansion board also has room for a 2708 EEPROMS each of 1K byte and a lot of programming software is available to fit these sockets.

POWER SUPPLIES

There are two power supplies available, a 3 amp supply which will power the basic kit and some future boards to be added and to keep your computer exceptional value for money. The Nascom 1 Kit.

1. Reverse polish notation
2. Multiple, divide, add, subtract, increment and decrement by one.
3. Integer up to 64K.
4. Variables A to Z.
5. Loops and jumps
6. Editor
7. Error messages
8. String handling

M5 is supplied on tape with an instruction manual packed with examples and a free dump of the language. For Nascom users we have priced M5 so that even Nascom owners can afford it.

ADDITIONAL FEATURES

1. Uses standard Veroboard as a motherboard and Standard 0.1" single sided edge connectors for expansion cards. These components are readily and cheaply available.
2. All cards use lower power, low noise shottky buffering which means the bus is quiet and does not need supression like active termination or interlaced ground planes.
3. Expansion boards are double-sided 8"x8" vero DIP boards which are economic and give a good usable area.

FREE Gift Pack

with all Nascom 1 purchases over £150.

Contains:

A copy of M5, pad of 100 Microdigital coding forms, 10 C15 cassettes, keyboard bleep kit, UHF modulator and keyboard ribbon cable.

Total Value nearly £30.00
Following the success of its NASCOM-1 Microcomputer which was released nearly 18 months ago, Nascom Microcomputers Limited has introduced the NASCOM-2.

In no way is the NASCOM-2 a replacement for the NASCOM-1. Over the 18 month period, it has become obvious that there is a marketplace for the NASCOM-1 for the foreseeable future. However, there was also a large market for an upgrade version which will have more of a computing bias. From this specification you will see that many of the additions necessary on the NASCOM-2 are integral in the NASCOM-2.

MICROPROCESSOR
Z80A, 800KHz. This chip will run at 4MHz but is selectable between 1/2/4MHz. This CPU has now been generally accepted as the most powerful 8 bit processor on the market. The software library for the Z80, with its base around the 8080, has rapidly expanded with the increasing use of its more powerful instruction set.

HARDWARE
12" x 8" Card
All components are from the Nasbus specification. All bus lines are fully buffered. 5V ±12%, ±5V

MEMORY
On-board, addressable memory: 1K Work Space/User RAM (MK411B)
2K Video RAM (MK414B)/12K ROM
1K Video RAM (MK411B)

INTERFACE KEYBOARD
New expanded 57 key Lexicon solid state keyboard especially built for Nascom. Users can add their own I/O drivers via the Nas-sys I/O driver table to suit particular applications.

The most obvious enhancement is the use of a blinking non-destructive (T4) with many additional functions. For use with the Nascom 2 and its new keyboard, a completely new monitor is available. Users can add their own I/O drivers via the Nas-sys I/O driver table to suit particular applications.

NASCOM Basic is based on the Microsoft 8K Basic which has become the de facto industry standard. It, therefore, offers a high degree of compatibility with other systems, and programs published in magazines and books should run under Nascom Basic with little or no change.

It offers a full range of string handling and arithmetic functions and handles numbers in the range 3.701 x 10^-38 to 2.9387 x 10^38. It also supports use of the PIO using the R/O, OUT and WAIT commands.

NASCOM BASIC operates with Nasbus T2. Nasbus T4 and the new Nas-Sys monitor. It is supplied as either 8 x 2700 EPROMS or 5 x MK3600 64K ROM.

The most obvious feature, when used with Nas-Sys, are the extensive line editing features which make data or program entry and modification very simple — allowing insertion, modification or deletion of single or multiple characters.

In order to allow for flexible screen formatting, a cursor positioning command (SCREEN) and a clear screen command (CLS) have been incorporated. Also, by setting parameters, input can be undertaken on a character by character basis so that forms can be simply created and edited on the screen. Backspace and delete functions are retained, and characters are input on a character by character basis when setting parameters on the serial interface. The width of a printed line can be set by the WIDTH command, and the serial interface turned on and off under program control so that a printer can be attached and supported with no additional software or interface hardware. Normally the LIST command scrolls five lines at a time, then waits for a character to be typed before scrolling another eleven characters (if typed). However, the number of lines scrolled can be set by the LINES command to any number allowing a complete LIST to be generated on a printer without pausing, or to scroll through a program at a faster (or slower) rate.

Program saving and loading uses the monitor's tape read and write routines, providing block checking and information about the success and progress of the operation on the screen. Program file names are displayed when read back. Array can be read or written to tape, and the Nascom routines incorporate a 16 bit sumcheck to verify the accuracy of data read.

System modifications and machine code routines have been made easier by the use of three commands: BREAK, DEER and DOKE, routines which read or write 16 bit integers.

The Nascom graphics option is supported by the routines SET(X, Y) and RES (X, Y), which light up or erase point X, Y on a 80 x 48 grid display. The function POINT(X,Y) returns the value 1 if point X,Y is lit, zero if it is not. It is, of course, of industrial standard, through hole plated, masked and screen printed.

DOCUMENTATION
Full construction article is provided for those who buy a kit and an extensive software manual is provided for the monitor and Basic.

Nascom-2 in kit form — 295.00
23.60 VAT
Total — 318.60

RING FOR A DELIVERY DATE

Nascom Nas-Sys I Monitor

For use with the Nascom 2 and its new keyboard, a completely new monitor has now been designed. It incorporates all the features of the Nasbus 3K Monitor (T4) with many additional functions.

The most obvious enhancement is the use of a blinking non-destructive cursor with on-screen editing facilities using the left, right, up and down arrows keys. A routine is provided which gives the user a pointer to an input line of text, input via the screen and keyboard, allowing users to program to exploit this powerful feature.

The method of calling routines has been modified and rationalised so that, in most cases, users need only a two byte RST operation. It also allows the monitor to be changed and improved at a later date without needing to re-allocate unused jump addresses.

Although primarily designed for use with the new keyboard, all features can be used with the current Nascom I keyboard by using combinations of keys. As with Nasbus T4, Asic terminal ports are fully supported via the serial interface. Users can also be switched on and off using the X and T commands. Users can add their own I/O devices via the Nas-Sys I/O driver table to support these devices.

The 22 commands supported are:

A - hexadecimal Arithmetic
B - set Breakpoint
C - Copy
E - Execute
G - Generate
H - Operate as half duplex ASCII terminal
I - set keyboard options
J - execute at FFA (to start Basic etc.)
K - set external device options
L - Read from tape
M - Modify store

A total of 42 useful RST instructions are provided including character input/output, string tests, relative subroutine call, input a line, position cursor etc.

Nascom 2 Expanded Keyboard

Ten new keys have been added, as follows:

G - Generate
B - set Breakpoint
A - hexadecimal Arithmetic
M - Modify store
O - Output to RIO port
X - set external device optionsK - set keyboard options
U - Utility
S - Single step
R - Read tape
N - return to Normal mode

F - load an additional useful character.
I - Load character for use with Nas-Sys.

The comprehensive modifications and extensions to the original Basic provide both the Nascom 1 and the Nascom 2 with probably the most powerful Basic available on any personal computer system today.

The comprehensive modifications and extensions to the original Basic provide both the Nascom 1 and the Nascom 2 with probably the most powerful Basic available on any personal computer system today.

Apple II

BM 1 5.4 3.9
BM 2 5.4 6.6 9.9
BM 3 13.3 8.6 10.0
BM 4 13.3 15.9 19.4
BM 5 13.3 18.3 22.3
BM 6 13.3 26.2 31.6
BM 7 5.2 6.2 12.3
Rockwell's AIM 65 Advanced Interactive Microcomputer can give you, into the existing world of microcomputers, a step into a lower cost computer you have thought possible. And you're free to experiment with the AIM 65, because it is a basic microcomputer system that's an exercising formats for new commercial and hobbyist applications.

As a leading act, AIM 65 gives you an enhanced,nee microcomputer system with a full-size keyboard, 20-character display and, optionally, a thermal printer. An on-line Advanced Interactive Monitor program provides on-line extensible console and program development functions. And, the versatile, versatile, 5-7 dot matrix format printer, compatible with most microcomputers, lets you master fundamentals rapidly. Then you'll appreciate the fast that the computer is "on" on the market. AIM 65's flexibility and expandability you would expect to find in a sophisticated microcomputer development system.

THERMAL PRINTER GIVES YOU HAND COPY — FAST AND QUIET. AIM 65's 25-column Thermal Printer makes good on the fast, thermal paper at a fast 120 lines per minute. It produces all the standard ASCII characters with a single print meal by seven dot matrix. AIM 65's on-board printer is a unique feature for a low-cost computer.

EXTENDED ALPHANUMERIC DISPLAY IS BUILT FOR UNDERSTANDING. Not DECIPHERING. The AIM 65's readable bright, magnified 16-segment font monolithic characters. And its 54 keys provide 70 different alphabetic, numeric, control and calculator-type keypad. And its 54 keys provide 70 different alphabetic, numeric, control and special functions.

ON-BOARD ADVANCED INTERACTIVE MONITOR GETS YOUR PROGRAMS UP AND RUNNING. The ROM-resident AIM 65 Advanced Interactive Monitor Program provides a comprehensive set of control and debugging facilities. The monitor also provides on-line protection normally available only in larger, more expensive microcomputer development systems. And, with the AIM 65 Monitor, there's no guesswork involved. The Monitor gives a self-explanatory prompt when you're not sure what to do. You'll master fundamentals rapidly. Then you'll appreciate the fact that unlike the computer on the market, AIM 65's flexible console and software you would expect to find in a sophisticated microcomputer development system.

On-board BASIC Advanced Interactive Monitor lets you develop your programs in Basic and it allows you to develop C programs in BASIC. AIM 65's on-board BASIC Interpreter is a powerful tool for the serious programmer. AIM 65's BASIC Interpreter is a powerful tool for the serious programmer. AIM 65's BASIC Interpreter is a powerful tool for the serious programmer. AIM 65's BASIC Interpreter is a powerful tool for the serious programmer. AIM 65's BASIC Interpreter is a powerful tool for the serious programmer.
A professional MPU card - designed as a general purpose industrial controller based on the 6502 MPU, this card is implemented by a matching Eurocard hex keyboard and cut standard cassette interface, to create the complete 6502 MPS-CSF/ACORN kit. With this kit, a choice of any available components may be used,

This compact stand-alone micro-computer is based on standard Eurocard modules, and employs the highly popular 6502 MPU (as used in Apple, Per. Kim, etc. Throughout, the design philosophy has been to provide full expandability, versatility and economy. Take a look at the full specification, and see how Acorn meets your requirements.

Acorn technical specification
The Acorn consists of two single Eurocards:
1. MPU card: 6502 microprocessor, 512 x 8 ACORN monitor, 1 x 6 RAM, 16 kio/16k (with 128kbytes of RAM, 1 x 16k crystal, 5 x Video, socket for 2x EPROM, 1 x battery socket.
2. Keyboard card: 25 click keys (16 hex, 9 control), 8 digit, 7 segment display CUTS standard crystal controlled tape interface circuitry.

Compact, easy to use Acorn Monitor includes the following facilities:
- System program
- Set of subroutines for use in programming
- Powerful debugging facility displays all internal registers
- Tape load and store routines

The kit is based on the National Semi-conductor SC/MP microprocessor and programs are entered in machine code through the cassette keyboard, resulting in one-on-one instructions. Each kit is supplied with an Operations Manual which contains operational instruction, software examples, data applications, including math routines, timing general purpose sequencing, games, etc.

The kit is ready built with full, from first principles of binary arithmetic, to efficient hex programming with the 6502 instruction set. The manual also includes a listing of the monitor programs and the instruction set, and other useful tabulations, plus a selection of 12 interesting and educative program samples.

Acorn MPU card with 1K RAM and keyboard card with cassette interface. In kit form, with assembly instructions. Total 517.00

Ready built

650.00
6.20
70.26

76.00
6.00
81.00

Acorn - with real expandability
The standard Acorn is fully expandable to 65k of memory, and the Acorn bus is available on the 64-way edge connector. Whether you're a beginner in the field, an ambitious home computer buff, a develop developer, an engineer, teacher or a business man, the Acorn and its family of modules will provide a practical solution in virtually every situation.

Acorn Operating Manual
With Acorn, you'll receive an operating manual that covers all programming in full, from first principles of binary arithmetic, to efficient hex programming with the 6502 instruction set. This manual also includes a listing of the monitor programs and the instruction set, and other useful tabulations, plus a selection of 12 interesting and educative program samples.

Microcomputer: 77/68

This is a new concept for low cost computing. Each of these bags contains all the parts necessary to build a versatile part of a microcomputer system. Each part is backed with the necessary hardware and software to enable a computer to be assembled from first principles of binary arithmetic.

Bear Bag No 1 77-68 P.C.B., Components & Edge Connector.

This contains all the parts which fit on this low cost start to a large 6800 microcomputer system. Nett 45.00 VAT 3.60 48.60

Bear Bag No 2 77-68 LED's and Switches.

This contains high spec LED's and high quality gold plated subminiature toggle switches suitable for low voltage low current sockets. Nett 27.70 VAT 2.22 29.92

Bear Bag No 4 77-68 5 x Rock Background.

This card frame is not the cheapest way of mounting 77-68 p.c.b.'s - but it is the recommended one. The lowest cost alternative is to use a wooden box and plastic double glaze channel for guides. Nett 75.00 VAT 6.00 81.00

Bear Bag No 5 77-68 4K RAM P.C.B. and Components.

This is the smallest assembly for any computer. This design is fully buffered and address decoded. The 4k block can be positioned anywhere within the 64k memory allowable. Nett 75.00 VAT 6.00 81.00

Bear Bag No 6 77-68 Man 1 P.C.B. and Components.

This board can support two V24/RS232 interfaces or 20 mA current loop only one supplied and a method of bootstrapping - a kit/kit of operating system into protected memory. A listing of an operating system is supplied and Kansas City cassette or paper tape is available. Brevett to load the operating system a Kansas City cassette interface if required (see Bear Bag No 10) or a terminal with a paper tape reader. Nett 50.70 VAT 4.06 54.76

Bear Bag No 9 Postivide V.D.U. Kit Mk II

All this equipment for a VDU on a single 8” x 4” card! The latest Thompson CSF Super Chip does all the hard work and the result is a full scaling VDU 54ch by 15 lines with full cursor control, software "home" and software of hardware clear screen, the interface is V24/RS232 switchable between 110 baud, 300 baud and 1200 baud.

Nett 85.00 VAT 6.80 91.80

Bear Bag No 10 Kansas City Cassette Interface.

This interface allows your multi bubble program to be stored in a cassette. The method of use is quite simple. It sits in the V24/RS232 interface between your computer and tape machine and is so located that it will operate in the same way as a cassette. Nett 18.95 VAT 1.52 20.47

Newbeare 77/68

This is a new concept for low cost computing. Each of these bags contains all the parts necessary to build a versatile part of a microcomputer system. Each part is backed with the necessary hardware and software to enable a computer to be assembled from first principles of binary arithmetic.

Bear Bag No 12 77-68 V.D.U. Kit

This is a Direct memory accessed type of Visual Display Unit which gives a very fast writing speed. Its format is 40ch by 24 lines e.g. Teletext. Its output is compatible video and it also has a keyboard interface which expects 7-bit ASCII and binary. Nett 69.50 VAT 5.60 75.06

Bear Bag No 13 77-68 Mos 2 Kit.

This board can support "MIKBUG" (with a hardware single step) or "SWATBUG" one 2708 Eprom. The V24/RS232 ports can be use one of the two 6821 PIA or the ACIA port. Nett 64.10 VAT 5.13 69.23

Bear Bag No 14 2708 Prom Programmer Kit (6800).

This is a low cost programmer which contains its own power supply and interfaces to a 6820 PIA. A novel approach has been adopted by supplying the necessary software in a 2708 and a short copying program to place it in RAM. A low insertion force socket is provided. Nett 36.00 VAT 2.80 37.80

Bear Bag No 15 Promverter. Mikbug to 2708.

All the people who have suffered MIKBUG now have the chance to write their own operating system, plug it in the 2708/6830 converter and replace it. Nett 8.50 VAT 0.68 9.18

Bear Bag No 16 77-68 Eeprom Board (ROMA).

This board holds up to 8K bytes of 2708 Eproms or 16K bytes of Intel 2176. This bag does not contain the EPROMS. Nett 29.50 VAT 2.36 31.86

Bear Bag No 17 77-68 Interface Board (PIN).

This is a utility board which helps make 77-68 the most complete hobbyist microcomputer system. It contains all the parts which fit on this low cost start to a large 6800 microcomputer system. Nett 46.00 VAT 3.60 48.60

Bear Bag No 18 Cottis Blandford Cassette Interface.

This is a utility board which helps make 77-68 the most complete hobbyist microcomputer system. Nett 17.25 VAT 1.38 18.63

Bear Bag No 21 Lower Case for Petitevid

A small modification to your "Petitevid" VDU kit can add lower case letters. Nett 10.50 VAT 0.84 11.34

Bear Bag No 23 Ouse Blandford Cassette Interface.

This is a utility board which helps make 77-68 the most complete hobbyist microcomputer system. Nett 10.50 VAT 0.84 11.34

Bear Bag No 24 Lower Case for Petitevid

A small modification to your "Petitevid" VDU kit can add lower case letters. Nett 10.50 VAT 0.84 11.34
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<td>No. 78 Integrated Circuit desoldering bit</td>
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<td>Stand</td>
<td>3.01</td>
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<td>Spare bit 1.5mm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Long Life bit</td>
<td>0.88</td>
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