ATARI 600XL/ 800XL

PRICE
600XL:£160
800XL:£250

DIMENSIONS
600XL:380×170×40mm
800XL:380×220×40mm

CPU
6502, 2MHz

MEMORY
16-64 Kbytes RAM, 24K ROM

SCREEN
Up to 24 rows of 40 columns of text, graphics up to 320×192 with sprites and 16 colours in 16 brightness levels

INTERFACES
Joysticks (2), peripheral port, expander port, cartridge port

LANGUAGES AVAILABLE
BASIC, FORTH, LOGO, PILOT, 6502 Assembly language

KEYBOARD
Typewriter-style with 62 keys, including cursor keys and dedicated function keys such as SELECT and START for program control

DOCUMENTATION
Manuals have never been one of Atari's strong points as the company has tended to view its computers primarily as games machines and has skimped on technical details. However, there is a vast range of superb independent manuals and magazines, although these do add to the cost of owning an Atari

STRENGTHS
The Ataris continue to offer the best in games computers with superb sound and graphics, and a vast range of software to choose from. The new machines also provide excellent expansion options

WEAKNESSES
Ataris can be expensive – you need a dedicated cassette recorder and the price of software is unusually high. Graphics and sound programming are also more difficult than with many machines

ROM
Two ROM chips hold the BASIC interpreter

Peripheral Port
A 13-pin port is used to connect the peripherals, including disk drives, printers, and the dedicated cassette recorder

Joystick Ports

Sound Chip
A custom-built chip called POKEY handles sound generation

I/O Chip
A 6520 handles the input and output ports

CPU
The Atari is based on a fast 6502 chip

Atari Cassette Recorder
The Atari only works with its own cassette recorder. Although this raises the price of the system, it does have advantages. Firstly, because the recorder is made by Atari it is more reliable. Secondly, the recorder uses two tracks. One track is for saving programs in the normal way, the other can have sound recorded on it. This allows language teaching programs to play fragments of speech at just the right moment