



# CUDDLY TOY

**For Commodore 64 artists the Koala-pad offers an easy way to produce high-quality graphic displays and overcomes the problems associated with graphics generation on this machine. Light, compact and easy to use, this peripheral device enables complex screen pictures to be built up at the touch of a finger.**

Despite its ability to produce excellent graphic effects, the Commodore 64 has so far not been provided with the high-quality graphics peripherals that have been produced for the BBC Micro. This is probably a result of the difficulties associated with the production of high resolution graphics on the 64 – difficulties that have deterred manufacturers from producing such a device. Now, however, Audiogenic has begun importing a graphics pad made by the American company Koala Technology that allows Commodore 64 owners easier access to the machine's high resolution graphics capabilities.

Unlike similar touch tablets such as the Grafpad (see page 169), the Koala-pad is light and compact, measuring only 20.5 by 16 cm (8 by 6in). In the centre is an 11 by 11 cm (4 by 4in) carbon fibre square that covers a touch-sensitive membrane that is similar to the Spectrum keyboard. By simply pressing a finger or a pen onto the membrane, the user can guide a cursor around the screen. This is in contrast to other graphics tablets, which require a special 'stylus' to complete the circuit.

The membrane consists of two sheets of conducting wires – one in the horizontal and one in the vertical axis. When the membrane is pressed, the pad detects which wires are in contact and sends the resulting co-ordinates to the computer. Above the touch membrane are two buttons, one of which must be pressed when the user wishes to colour in a point on the screen or select one of the various paint options that are available. Either button may be used – presumably this is to cater for both left- and right-hand users.

## COLOURING IN

The Koala-pad connects to the computer via the joystick port, and Koala Painter (the software needed to work the pad) is loaded from disk. Once loaded, a display of the various options available appears on screen. At the bottom of the screen is the 'palette' containing 16 'true' and 16 'tinted' colours. The tints are built up by colouring alternate pixels in different hues, giving the effect of shading. Above the palette are eight boxes containing the 'brushes'. These simply consist of various shapes that may be plotted on the screen, and range from a single pixel to combinations of pixels and lines. Surrounding the brushes are the

various options for drawing lines or shapes on the screen. These are selected by the user pressing on the pad membrane and thus directing a cursor arrow. When the arrow points to the desired option, pressing one of the Select buttons on the pad brings it into effect. The option flashes to remind the user which mode is currently in use. The Koala-pad provides the facilities to produce single lines, rays (lines drawn from a single point), frames and circles. Blocks of colour may be added by using the 'box' (coloured squares) or 'disc' option (coloured circles). Further colouring is achieved by using the FILL command to fill an enclosed area with a chosen colour. Colours are altered by using the X-COLOUR command.

Identical figures may be drawn simultaneously by using the MIRROR command. This divides the screen into four sections, with the cursor restricted to the top left-hand quarter. Anything plotted within that

### Hand-Held

Complex and sophisticated graphics screens can be built up in a few hours using the easily understandable menu-driven software. Unlike many similar graphics tablets, the Koala-pad can be held in the hand while being operated



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