



FIRM OFFER

With the introduction of the Macintosh, Apple Computer has firmly established its name in the UK market. More recently, the company has turned its attention to upgrading its existing line of 6502 machines — the Apple II family. We examine the new Apple IIc computer, and consider the company's marketing strategy.

The success of the Macintosh, and increased competition — in the US home computer market from Commodore and in the world business market from companies like ACT and IBM — had put the future of the Apple II range of computers in some doubt. Many dealers and industry analysts predicted that the range was nearing the end of its market life, despite Apple's insistence that it would remain committed to the 6502 machine and its large user base. To demonstrate its support, the company recently launched the Apple IIc, as well as software and hardware upgrades for the older Apple II lines. The new products are expected to extend the market life of the Apple II by as much as three years.

In its various forms (II, II+, and IIe), the Apple

II helped to create the personal computer market, dominated US computer sales for several years and contributed to Apple's total sales record of over \$1 billion. There are over two million Apple computers in use worldwide, yet the Apple II has never reached the same level of sales success in the UK or other parts of Europe, primarily because of ineffective pricing and marketing policies. At £1,500 (including monitor and disk drive) the machine was priced much too high to be considered a home computer. And interference from Apple headquarters in California is often cited as the reason why Apple has never gained the kind of share of the UK educational or business markets that it has in America. Nevertheless, the relatively small group of Apple users in the UK tends to be fiercely loyal to the machine.

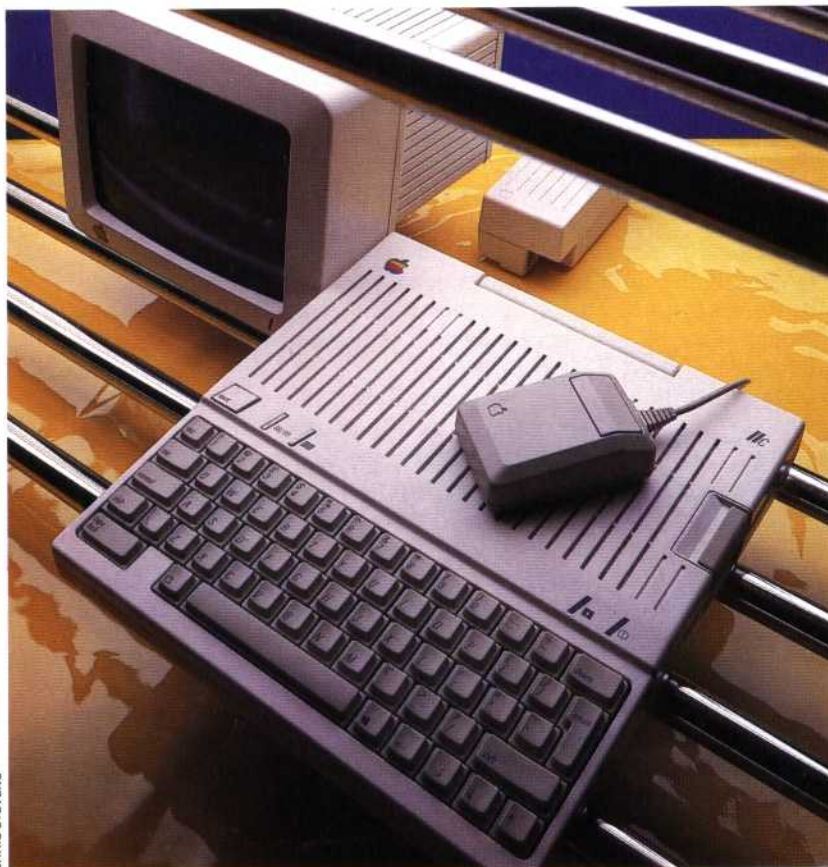
The latest incarnation of the Apple II is the IIc (the *c* stands for compact). It is smaller than its predecessors by about half, yet houses a half-height 5¼in disk drive in the side of its casing. At 3.4kg (7.5lb), the IIc is meant to be transportable, and is clearly designed to be used during the day at work and then to be carried home at night. Towards this end, the IIc has a small carrying handle moulded into its plastic case, and a choice of connectors (for use with a composite or RGB monitor at work and a standard television set at home). The carrying handle folds back to prop the machine up into a comfortable working angle. This also keeps air circulating around the machine to prevent overheating.

Unlike the previous Apple II models, the IIc is a closed system, with no expansion slots inside. Instead, Apple has built several of the most important options into the machine. These include the monitor and television display ports; a joystick port that also supports the optional mouse; a modem port; a printer port; an audio output socket and a connector for a second disk drive. The interfaces are labelled with icons — small pictorial representations of their function. The IIc also has a built-in 80-column display, and 128 Kbytes of RAM. Most of these features are optional on the IIe, and would require the addition of at least three plug-in expansion cards.

The Apple IIc has a 63-key QWERTY keyboard, with a similar layout to the IIe. The Reset key, however, has been moved to a position above the left edge of the keyboard, and two small switches have been added next to it. The left switch toggles the screen display between 40 and 80 columns. The owner's manual recommends that you use a 40-column display when working with a television set, and an 80-column display for a monitor. (Some of the existing Apple software will

Portable Upgrade

Apple's new, upgraded portable version of the Apple II, is the IIc. The IIc has 128K of RAM, an 80-column display, a variety of interfaces and a built-in disk drive. The IIc costs £925, and is shown here with the optional green phosphor monitor



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