



VIDEO STAR

The American SpectraVideo computers incorporate many of the features of the MSX standard devised by a number of Japanese and American companies. Although they are newcomers to the European computer market, their low price and potential for expansion should assure them a bright future.

The SpectraVideo 318 is a low-cost home computer that is undeniably of the same quality as the BBC Micro and the Commodore 64. It incorporates a three-voice sound synthesiser, high resolution graphics with sprites, a built-in joystick and a cartridge port.

The keyboard is very close to the MSX specifications (see page 141). It is of similar design to that of the Sinclair Spectrum and has the same style rubber pressure pad keys. However, the keys are well spaced out and the keyboard is generally much more pleasant to use.

The cursor pad has been turned into a built-in joystick. A disc replaces the usual four arrow keys and you can tap the disc in the relevant place to

move up, down, left or right. Alternatively, you can slot in a joystick handle and generate the key presses simply by moving the joystick. You can also use the joystick to position the cursor over mistakes while correcting a program.

The SpectraVideo's BASIC is the latest in a line of interpreters written by the Microsoft company. This version is close to MSX BASIC, itself an extension of the GW BASIC used on machines such as the IBM PC. BASIC programs are easily developed with the full screen editor and general facilities such as renumbering and automatic line numbering. Although there are none of the new 'structured' commands found in many new BASICs such as WHILE...WEND and REPEAT...UNTIL, this version does have IF...THEN...ELSE, which is necessary for writing neat and efficient programs. The BASIC also takes full advantage of the SpectraVideo's graphics.

The screen has a reasonable resolution of 256 by 192 dots in 16 colours, although small groups of dots must share the same colours. This may seem poor compared to machines such as the BBC Micro, but it is the level of control over the screen that makes for good graphics and not

SpectraVideo Keyboard

The 318's keyboard is very close to the MSX specifications. It is a Spectrum-style rubber mat design but the spacing and quality of the keys make it perfectly usable. It is a copiously equipped keyboard with all the usual keys such as Control, Escape, Tab and Backspace, plus five function keys (each with two functions), a STOP key, a SELECT key and a set of editing keys such as INS, DEL and COPY. A set of graphics shapes, such as blocks, dots and lines is available by pressing a letter key in combination with either the LEFT GRPH key or the RIGHT GRPH key. The shapes produced by each key are clearly marked on the keyboard.

