



THE SMART SET

Coleco is an American company that made its name as a manufacturer of television games consoles. Recently, however, it moved into the home computer market with the Adam, a machine that boasts 80 Kbytes of RAM, a built-in word processor, a tape data storage system, and a daisy wheel printer. All for £625.

The Adam system is based around the ColecoVision television games console, and owners of this unit may upgrade it to full Adam specification with add-on units. In fact, all Adams on sale at the present time are based on the ColecoVision module, although a more compact, stand-alone Adam is planned.

When first unpacking the boxes containing the Adam system, the sheer number of components is a little unsettling. The ColecoVision module clips into a large plastic tray, and the 'memory module' (which also contains the Z80A microprocessor and the tape drive) connects to the games unit via an expansion port. The module is held in place by retaining clips on the tray. The keyboard is connected by a length of coiled cable, and one of the two games controllers supplied may be slotted onto the side of the keyboard to act as a numeric key pad. The printer is connected to the memory module, and the power is supplied to the whole

system via a mains lead to the printer.

The keyboard has 75 keys, including six function keys, a set of word processor control keys, a cursor cluster, and the usual alphanumeric. It is well designed and light, so it is easy to use in a lap-held position.

When the system is first switched on, the Adam is in 'electronic typewriter' mode. Pressing a key displays the character on the screen and at the same time it is printed out. The screen is a representation of a sheet of paper and typewriter platen. The usefulness of the Adam in this mode is limited, but the press of a key switches the system to 'SmartWriter' mode.

SmartWriter is a simple but effective word processor that is obviously designed with the beginner in mind. The 'typewriter platen' display is retained, and the bottom line of the screen displays the commands allocated to the function keys. Sensible use of these keys, together with the various word processor control keys on the keyboard, makes SmartWriter operation extremely easy — in fact the manual is largely superfluous as the menu options lead the user through all the steps necessary to store, display and print text. The screen format is 36 columns by 20 lines, but longer lines are dealt with by using the screen as a 'window' on the whole text.

The tape drive is similar in principle to Sinclair's Microdrive, but has a larger capacity (a claimed



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The Adams Family

The Adam is an all or nothing machine. It is sold as a complete system: micro, high-speed tape drive, daisy wheel printer, keyboard, two joysticks and three pieces of software (two excellent games and a word processor.) This makes the Adam quite a powerful home computer, yet it is essentially an upgrade of a TV games unit