



# ONE STEP BEYOND



## Meet The Family

The Sinclair name has appeared on a considerable range of products: from audio amplifiers and the celebrated Black Watch, through calculators and computers, to the long-awaited flat-screen television and electric car. Technical ingenuity and innovation, stylish hi-tech product design, and ambitious marketing strategies have been Sinclair hallmarks from the start, though critics would say that press-release engineering, gimmickry and over-optimistic delivery schedules were more accurate labels

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**When Clive Sinclair announced the ZX Spectrum, he claimed that it was comparable with the BBC Micro, which cost twice as much. Two years later, when announcing the QL, he was even more ambitious, and compared the QL with computers costing five times as much, such as the IBM PC and the Apple Macintosh.**

It is little wonder that so many people are confused about the Sinclair QL and its real worth. Firstly there was the massive media hype of the launch. The public were told that the QL was the most advanced home computer to date, boasting a 32-bit 68008 CPU, a four-program suite of integrated business software and a resident BASIC that would surpass any version available.

However the excitement provoked by the QL's announcement gradually wore off, as delivery dates approached and receded, and people realised that perhaps the claims were slightly exaggerated. A real backlash came when it was realised — Sinclair's assurances notwithstanding — that the machine was nowhere near ready for public release: all the money paid by the advance mail-order customers was just going to sit in the Sinclair bank accounts earning interest, while the

anxious public waited and recalled previous Sinclair machine launches and deliveries.

There was, however, one big difference between the Spectrum and QL launches — although the Spectrum 28-day delivery promises were not met, nonetheless review models of the machine were given to journalists immediately after the launch, the machines did work, and they were virtually identical to those eventually released to the public; in the case of the QL, however, Sinclair had to admit that the promised 'SuperBASIC' and the operating system would not fit into the allocated 32 Kbytes of ROM — 48 Kbytes were going to be needed, but there was no room on the circuit board for the extra chip!

Rather than waste time and money redesigning the circuit board, the Sinclair staff came up with the now-infamous 'kludge' (sometimes wrongly called the 'dongle'). This was a small black plastic box protruding from the QL's cartridge port and containing the missing parts of BASIC and the operating system.

This at least enabled Sinclair to get some working machines out of the factory door, with the promise that the machines would be 'de-kludged' by a true upgrade later. The original 28-day delivery claims had by now turned into three months. Several versions of the operating system