



As an example, the command CSR x,y will position the cursor at the point with the co-ordinates (x,y) on the screen. A more powerful command is CRVS, which enables the user to define a window anywhere on the screen. Text or graphics can be displayed within these windows.

There are also commands built into the language to enable the control of sprites. A particularly useful command in this respect, GENPAT, allows you to set the sprite pattern, rather than having to put the pattern into data statements. The Memotech graphics are provided by the TMS9929A Video chip — which is the one specified for MSX machines.

The central processor of the Memotech machines is the Z80, and this of course, enables them to run the CP/M operating system. Many small computer manufacturers choose the Z80 processor because it runs CP/M, which avoids the problem of having to generate a large software base before the customers can take full advantage of a new computer. Of course, to really make the most of CP/M, the computer has to have an 80-column screen, and, unusually, Memotech has provided an 80-column card inside the disk drive. The drives themselves are double-sided and double-density, and have a transfer rate to the computer of 9,200 baud.

Provided with the disk drive is a package of bundled software. Apart from a CP/M systems disk, the package includes the NewWord word processor, the SuperCalc spreadsheet, Compact and Televideo — which allow the drives to read disks written in other disk formats (Memotech claims this includes IBM disks) — and Contact, which enables the second RS232 port to link into a networked system.

The RS128 has 128 Kbytes of RAM on board. However, as it uses an eight-bit processor, and is only able to address 64 Kbytes, the other 64 Kbytes are provided as a 'silicon disk'. A silicon disk stores files and programs in exactly the same way as a floppy disk, but as it is held on chips it is up to 50 times faster than a conventional floppy disk. Information held on a silicon disk is transferred to addressable RAM when it is required. At the end of a work session, the data can be permanently stored on a floppy disk.

The manual provided with the machine is much larger than those usually provided with home computers, although this is predominantly because it has not been typeset, and there is not a great deal more information included. However, Memotech has included all the technical details a user might need, including circuit diagrams, pinouts and operating system calls.

In upgrading the Memotech 500 series to the RS128, the company has made strenuous efforts to produce a business standard machine. At £399, the machine certainly looks worthy competition for the Sinclair QL, the BBC Micro and the Commodore Plus/4. However, it remains to be seen whether the machine will generate sales to compare with those of its rivals.



FDX Twin Disk Drive

The FDX twin disk drive allows the computer to run the popular CP/M operating system. Each of the 5 1/4 inch disk drives can store up to 500 Kbytes of information



Star Command

Utilities

Payroll

Basic Business

Memotech RS128

PRICE

£399

DIMENSIONS

488x202x56mm

CPU

Z80A running at 4MHz

MEMORY

64K RAM and 24K ROM

SCREEN

40x24 in text mode. Text with graphics mode: 32x24 text and 256x192 pixels in 16 colours.

There are also facilities for up to 32 independently controllable sprites

INTERFACES

Cassette (Mic and Ear) ports; I/O interface; two joystick ports; two RS232 ports; hi-fi jack; composite video jack; TV jack; parallel interface

LANGUAGES

BASIC, FORTH, PASCAL

KEYBOARD

57 typewriter keys; keys F and J are recessed for finger location. 12 function keys on a numeric keypad and eight programmable function keys

DOCUMENTATION

The manual provided is the same as that for the MTX500 series. The manual is extremely comprehensive, although perhaps much of the tutorial is pitched a little too high for the beginner

STRENGTHS

The addition of the RS232 boards make the RS128 a very attractive buy for the 'serious' home user and small businessman

WEAKNESSES

Despite the machine's ability to run CP/M, the RS128 is still poorly supported in terms of software written especially for the machine

Software Support

These are some of the business and games packages that are currently available for the Memotech machines. Compared with some other machines, the amount of software available is rather limited, but access to the CP/M pool of software should go some way towards rectifying this problem