Futuristic

Home computers have developed enormously over the last five years, but what will the next five years bring? Compare our ideas with your predictions

What will the home computer of the 1990's look like and how will it function? These are the questions that this section will attempt to answer, by considering in turn some of the main components and systems of tomorrow's machine. Many of the ideas are based on technologies that are just coming on the market (perhaps in other fields than computing), while others represent what we believe to be likely developments.

One of the most fundamental features of our hypothetical design is modularity. Having purchased the base unit, the user will have a wide range of options for expanding the machine. Indeed, the user will virtually be able to design his own machine by selecting this graphics module and that sound facility. Of one thing we can be sure: the rate of change in the computer marketplace will continue to accelerate for many years to come.

1 Keyboard Display

The 32-bit microprocessor's power will allow the display of information in a number of forms simultaneously. For instance, the main screen might show the view from the command seat of a spacecraft, while a subsidiary screen mounted on top of the keyboard/command console might display control information from the cockpit

2 Keyboard

Despite the innate inefficiency of the QWERTY keyboard, it is unlikely that serious attempts will be made to establish an alternative layout. Fully sprung typewriter-style keys are by far the most popular — though Hall effect keys, which use magnets instead of springs, are likely to become commonplace. The electronic switches themselves may well be replaced by a system that relies on the keys interrupting a matrix of laser beams

3 Monitor

Projector televisions have been available since the beginning of the 1980's, but their scope is limited by the light-emitting power of the cathode ray tube. Advances in CRT technology are likely to bring us room-wide projection systems. Early projector televisions had to make use of special curved screens, but the latest models can already focus onto a flat surface