PACKAGE DEAL

The Amstrad CPC 464 packs more computing power and facilities into a cheaper package than most home computers. Not only do you get a sophisticated home micro, but a built-in cassette recorder and a display monitor are supplied as standard.

The Amstrad computer is available in two versions. Both models feature the same basic computer, but are supplied with different monitors — one monochrome, the other RGB colour. The power supply for the computer is housed inside the monitor case and connecting leads carry the power and monitor signals to the computer. As the cassette recorder is also built into the computer case, there is only a single mains power lead to supply the whole system, resulting in a minimum of connecting leads.

The monochrome monitor has a green screen that gives a very clear, crisp display, which is suitable for business and other textual work. There is a slight undulation of the picture, which is probably caused by the proximity of the power supply in the monitor case. The colour monitor is of medium resolution only. This means that, although this monitor will display the Amstrad's multi-colour graphics to the full, it cannot display 80-column text in a readable form.

To go with the businesslike monochrome monitor, the Amstrad has a full typewriter-style keyboard with a separate numeric keypad. All the keys may be redefined to create characters other than those marked on the key-tops. In addition, the numeric keypad can act as a set of programmable function keys. Any string of up to 32 characters can be programmed into each of these keys. Single keys can thus be used to load or list a program or to clear the screen.

The cassette recorder is fairly standard in design. The computer has simple stop-start control over the drive motor when a program is being loaded or saved. Two program loading speeds — 1,000 or 2,000 baud — are available on the Amstrad; these can be selected from the software. When loading a program, the computer automatically detects which speed was used for the recording and adjusts accordingly. Although the reliable 1,000 baud speed is used as the default setting, the fast speed is perfectly secure for most uses. This is the speed used by most of the program tapes available for the Amstrad.

As well as the features built into the Amstrad, there is also provision for a wide range of peripherals. A Centronics printer will plug straight into the micro via a rather crude edge-connector. Disk drives may also be added, but these are not yet available, although a disk drive add-on giving the computer extra memory, the

Monitor Options
The cheaper version of the Amstrad comes with a monochrome monitor, but a version with a colour monitor costs under £350. The machines cannot be bought without monitors. The two programs seen running are Wordhang, which is a version of Hangman, and Admiral Graf Spee, a World War Two naval game

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