



ORIC'S OFFSPRING

The Oric-1 was launched onto the UK market in 1983, but has never enjoyed the success of its competitor, the Sinclair Spectrum, because of design faults and a lack of software support. Now, Oric Products has launched a new and improved model, the Oric Atmos, which has remedied the shortcomings of the previous machine.

Equipped with a powerful Microsoft-style BASIC, a built-in Centronics printer port and a standard RGB monitor socket, the Oric-1 originally looked a good investment. However, a shortage of good software, coupled with some irritating bugs in the BASIC ROM, resulted in a lukewarm reception for the new machine.

Oric Products International has now rectified the major ROM errors and repackaged the computer as the Oric Atmos. The old calculator-style keyboard has been replaced by more professional full-travel typewriter keys, and the casing has been redesigned in a stylish red and black livery. The keyboard layout is the same as that of the Oric-1, with the addition of a Function key, which is as yet unconnected but is supplied in

the interests of 'future expansion'.

The Atmos uses the 6502 microprocessor, and in normal operation has 37 Kbytes of RAM free for BASIC programming. Eight colours may be displayed by the Atmos, which has a maximum resolution of 240 × 200 pixels. The character set is held in RAM, allowing any character to be user-defined. There is also an alternative character set, which gives teletext-style block graphics. Unlike the Spectrum, which maintains a separate attribute file in RAM, the Atmos uses 'serial attributes'. These use less memory but are displayed on the screen as blank spaces, so care must be taken when planning screen displays.

The Atmos ROM contains four pre-set sounds — ZAP, PING, SHOOT and EXPLODE — and these provide arcade-type sound effects. The MUSIC, PLAY and SOUND commands allow the user to take full advantage of the Oric's sophisticated sound chip, by setting a wide range of parameters to vary the sound. Volume ranges from very quiet to extremely loud, and the three tone channels and one noise channel give a seven-octave range.

The original Oric BASIC was notable for several annoying bugs. The TAB command did not work properly and the display was often corrupted by



Atmos System

The Oric Atmos is a modestly priced home computer with 48K of memory, colour graphics and sound. Oric makes two add-ons for the Atmos, both in matching colours. The disk drive gives a fast alternative to using a cassette recorder and the printer/plotter can draw lines or text in colour.

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