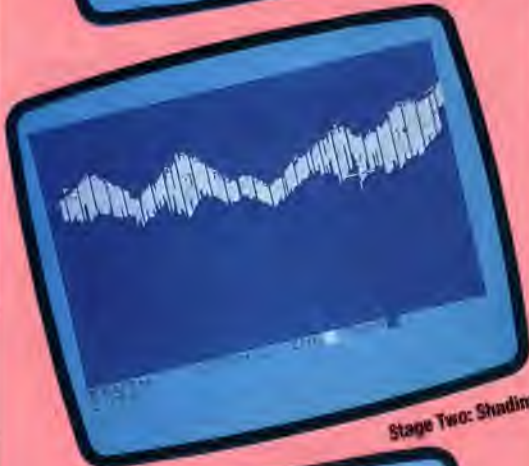




Stage One: Outline



Stage Two: Shading



Stage Three: Details



Stage Four: Colour

A Touching Scene

Touchmaster can be used as a graphics tablet with the Multipaint software and overlay that are supplied with the product. We show stages in the development of a scene from line sketch to coloured and shaded image

foreground and background colours. Colours may be changed by pressing the required option on the menu until the desired choice appears in the status window.

Once the correct colours and brush types have been selected, further options are available for the creation of boxes, circles, polygons and 'rubber-banded' lines. A stylus is supplied with the package, but finger pressure may be used instead. The Touchmaster, with its larger tablet area, does not suffer from the same restrictions as the Koala-pad (see page 629): pressure from a finger may be translated into a precise co-ordinate rather than a mere approximation, so electronic finger-painting is a real possibility!

Unfortunately, Multipaint offers no more than rudimentary features. A FILL option is marked on the template and documented in the manuals, but — on the Spectrum version at least — this does not appear to operate in the expected manner. Neither is there any facility for magnification or editing, which means that colours may not be changed. On the Spectrum, where it is often easier to draw in black and white before adding colour, this is a decided disadvantage.

As a piece of hardware the Touchmaster tablet appears to have a lot going for it compared with rivals like the Grafpad and the Koala-pad. It is robustly built and offers a full A4-sized drawing area that can be connected to most of the more popular home computers. One significant advantage is that if you decide to upgrade or change your machine in the future, all that is required is a new interface — plus the appropriate software, of course.

It is a disappointment that the documentation and software supplied should be so poor compared with the standard of the tablet itself. Touchmaster is bringing out a range of software designed specifically for use with this tablet; although the real proof of success will come if independent software houses decide to support it.

TOUCHMASTER

PRICE

£149.95, additional software packages £9.99

DIMENSIONS

350×330×35 mm

INTERFACES

Serial and parallel ports are provided for use with a wide range of home computers or the Touchmaster's own keypad

DOCUMENTATION

Although the manuals contain the necessary information to use the Touchmaster, more detailed information would have been welcome

STRENGTHS

The wide range of interfaces, together with the different software packages, make the Touchmaster an extremely adaptable peripheral

WEAKNESSES

The quality of the software compares badly with similar devices and the manuals are limited

Lay It On Me

There are various games, entertainments, educational programs and utilities available for Touchmaster from the major retailers. Each package costs £9.99 and includes the appropriate software (for a range of micros), instructions and the imaginative overlays — some of which we illustrate here