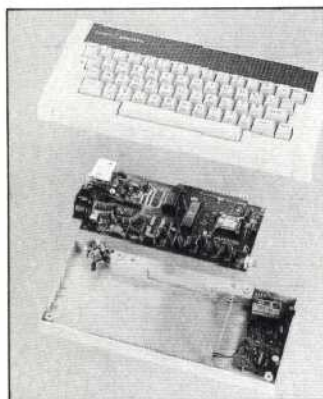


Micro Update



ACORN ELECTRON

TYPICAL PRICE: £199.

STANDARD MEMORY: 32K.

EXPANDABLE TO: Non-expandable.

CONNECTS TO: Colour TV monitor and cassette deck.

ADVANTAGES: Cheaper than the BBC Micro, though it has a comparable specification, and it still has a full 56-key keyboard.

DISADVANTAGES: Much slower than its big brother.

SUMMARY: The Electron's value is enhanced by the fact that there is a certain degree of software compatibility with the BBC Micro, although the difference in speed may detract from this.

After the great Christmas home computer bonanza, prices of micros in your High Street shops continue to follow the downward trend signalled by the specialist retailers. So to keep you up to date on how to get what you want at the best possible price, here are the latest changes in price and specification together with details of some more machines that have only very recently come on to the market.

There has been a price change on the **Atari 800**, which has gone down by £20, from £300 to £280. This is probably due to the arrival of its successor, the 800XL (see panel).

Both **Commodore** machines have been the subject of vigorous price cutting: the **Commodore 64** is down £99 to a more realistic £200, and the **VIC 20** is down to just £100. This, in fact, is an even better deal than it seems, as many retail outlets are selling VIC 20 starter kits, which include the cassette unit and other bits and pieces.

Dragon, instead of cutting the cost of their machine, have introduced a 64K version, which is currently selling at £225. The old 32K machine is holding its price, but can be found in some shops for as little as £165.

One machine to disappear completely from the scene is the **Jupiter Ace**. This is perhaps not surprising as it uses FORTH, which is of

almost no interest to the beginner, instead of BASIC — and also because of its shoddy manufacture.

Oric have dropped the price of their 16K machine from £130 to £100, while the 48K version has fallen by £29 to a new low price of £140.

The cheap and very popular **Sinclair ZX81** is likely to remain with us for at least another year, and has also been subject to a small price cut. It now sells for just £40, which ensures its place as the cheapest micro on the market.

Sord have decided to maintain the price of their M5, but have increased the memory size to 20K.

Finally, **Texas Instruments** have dropped the price of their **TI99/4A** by a further £50, and it is now selling at £100. But beware, this machine will disappear from the shops any time now.



AQUARIUS

TYPICAL PRICE: £50.

STANDARD MEMORY: 4K.

EXPANDABLE TO: 8K (+£20), 20K (+£30).

CONNECTS TO: Colour TV, RS232 expansion unit with two joypads.

ADVANTAGES: Cheap machine, but the add-ons are expensive.

DISADVANTAGES: Bad keyboard, small memory and little software available.

SUMMARY: UK's cheapest colour computer.



ATARI 600XL

TYPICAL PRICE: £160.

STANDARD MEMORY: 16K.

EXPANDABLE TO: 64K+£90.

CONNECTS TO: Colour TV monitor, up to 4x88K floppy disks (£299 each), two joysticks, printer and cassette deck.

ADVANTAGES: Optional Centronics and RS232 module for £135.

DISADVANTAGES: Software, as usual, is expensive for the Atari.

SUMMARY: The 600XL replaces the Atari 400, and is compatible with both hardware add-ons and software from its predecessor.



ATARI 800XL

TYPICAL PRICE: £250.

STANDARD MEMORY: 64K.

EXPANDABLE TO: Non-expandable.

CONNECTS TO: Colour TV monitor, up to 4x127K floppy disks (£299 each), printer and cassette deck.

ADVANTAGES: Very good keyboard. Greater expandability than its predecessor.

DISADVANTAGES: Software, as usual, is expensive for the Atari.

SUMMARY: Currently top end of the Atari range.



SHARP MZ-700

TYPICAL PRICE: £250.

STANDARD MEMORY: 64K.

EXPANDABLE TO: Non-expandable.

CONNECTS TO: Colour TV, two joysticks and printer.

ADVANTAGES: Optional built-in cassette recorder and printer.

DISADVANTAGES: The BASIC is not held in ROM, and must therefore be loaded from tape.

SUMMARY: Serious hobbyist machine.