Sir Clive Sinclair

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The entrepreneur/engineer who made the computer more widely available

Stop someone in the street and ask them if they can describe what a Spectrum or a ZX81 looks like and you'll probably get a blank stare. But ask if they have heard of Sir Clive Sinclair and the chances are anybody who reads newspapers and watches television will know that you are talking about a millionaire electronics genius.

It is fair to say that this 43-year-old ex-technical journalist is the most famous individual in the computer world. He has been described as doing for the personal computer what Henry Ford did for the motor car and Freddy Laker achieved in the air travel industry.

His success at designing and marketing the world's most successful computer — the ZX81 — was rewarded earlier this year when he was awarded a knighthood for putting Britain back in the technological race against Japan and the USA.

Clive Sinclair was born in London in 1940. He left school at 17 after completing his education at St George's College in Weybridge. He was a technical journalist for four years before forming his first company, Sinclair Radionics, in 1962. The first products were radio and amplifier kits sold by mail order.

Sir Clive has made his fortune from his ingenious computer designs that have turned into the ZX81 and ZX Spectrum. But he was also responsible for the world's first low-cost, electronic calculator which he launched in 1972. There was even a gold plated model which sold

for £2,750! He also made one of the first digital wristwatches using a microchip.

His most recent innovation is the flat-screen television which is no bigger than a paper-back book and which has a two-inch screen. This will sell for £80 and will be available later this year.

Now Sir Clive is working on his most ambitious project of all — an electrically-powered car. The team working on this project is working towards building a new electric vehicle for town use.

But Sir Clive is also an established publisher. He has written around 17 books himself on electronic subjects and in 1981 launched a new publishing company called Sinclair Browne. He publishes around 20 fiction and non-fiction books a year.

Early in 1983 the *Guardian* newspaper named him 'Young Businessman Of The Year'. The influential trade magazine *Computing* gave him the title 'Computing's Person Of The Decade'.

He escapes from the world of electronics by going to the theatre and poetry readings and he is a trustee of the Cambridge Symphony Orchestra. Sir Clive divides his time between his Cambridge headquarters and his London office and his silver Porsche 924 Carrera can often be seen streaking along the A1.

Sir Clive is a great patriot. His aim is to persuade fellow Britons that there is nothing that the American and Japanese can do that can't be done in their own country.

1962
Clive Sinclair forms Sinclair Radionics in Islington, London, to sell radio and amplifier kits by mail order

1972
Sinclair produces world's first pocket calculator, the Executive, which sells for £79 and earns over £2.5 million in export revenue

1975
Sinclair launches one of the first digital watches, which he calls the Black Watch. However, the company sustains losses due to difficulties with chip supplies

1976
National Enterprise Board gives Sinclair cash to develop his pocket television which is put onto the market the following year after a 12-year development programme

1979
Sinclair sets up a new company, Sinclair Research, to develop products in the consumer electronics field

1980
The new company launches its first product, the ZX80 computer, which is acclaimed as the first computer to sell for less than £100

1981
Sinclair developes the ZX81 computer, which wins a Design Council Award and sells more than one million units in two years

1982
The Spectrum is introduced to sell alongside the ZX81 but designed for a wider range of home, office, and educational uses

1983
The long-awaited Microdrive arrives, along with the Interface I and Interface II, which expand the Spectrum to take ROM cartridges and local area network facilities. Sinclair also announces his new flat-screen personal television set after a four-year £4 million development programme

1984
Sinclair launches the QL, aimed at the small business market, with 128 Kbytes of RAM and 200 Kbytes of back-up in two built-in Microdrives