



SCRIBBLE PAD

The Grafpad is a digitising tablet for producing detailed designs and drawings on a home micro. It offers a basic specification at a price low enough to attract people who would normally avoid this area because of the costs involved. There are versions available for the BBC Micro, Commodore 64 and Sinclair Spectrum.

Graphics tablets are one of the most versatile and useful peripherals for micros. They have obvious uses as drawing and design aids, from freehand art to electronic circuit design and tracing maps. But beside straightforward drawing applications, they provide a useful extra input device. A card overlay on the graphics tablet can have all of a program's features laid out, either in words or pictorially. All you do is touch the appropriate command with the stylus (pen), and the software will work out which option you have selected.

Such systems used to be the preserve of specialist machines, sold specifically for designers

and engineers. But prices have fallen sufficiently to let home users try tablets out for themselves. The Grafpad examined here is one of the leading low-cost designs, bringing a good specification for a reasonable price. It's available in specific versions for the BBC Micro, Commodore 64 and Sinclair Spectrum. The version illustrated here is for the BBC.

There are three elements to the Grafpad: the pad itself, a linked stylus and the controlling software. The pad connects to the BBC via the user port and the stylus plugs in to its side. The surface of the pad is divided into a ruled grid of 16 by 20 boxes and a command bar (a separate panel with single letters inscribed on it). The command bar can be used to control some of the software without the need to use a keyboard. On top of this slots a perspex cover to protect the surface of the pad. It is possible to design your own 'overlays' with your own commands and grids drawn on them.

Inside the pad is a grid of 320 by 256 wires approximately 1.2mm apart. The stylus nib is a

Graphic Ideas

The Grafpad can be used with its own software to create designs and drawings, or with your own programs as an input device

