



# BBC Model B

**A fine technical specification backed by the marketing and programming resources of the BBC has made this micro popular in both schools and homes**

The BBC Model B is manufactured by Acorn Computers in Cambridge and marketed by the BBC. There were originally two models, but the cheaper and less sophisticated Model A is now being phased out.

The Model B has sold very well to schools and is on the official Government approval list for this purpose. A considerable amount of educational software has been developed for this machine — from programming languages to Computer Aided Learning packages.

The technical specification of the Model B is still considered to be extremely fine, despite the number of new machines that have been launched since its introduction. In particular, the programming language BBC BASIC is very well equipped with commands to cope with the special functions. It also makes the task of developing and editing programs easier.

There are eight distinct graphics modes. This means that the user has a choice of low, medium or high resolution, though in the latter case the number of colours available is limited. The maximum resolution obtainable is  $640 \times 256$ . Most users opt for a domestic television set, but a

dedicated monitor is recommended to get the very best results from the Model B's graphics. Commands exist to draw lines, circles and construct a variety of images on the screen.

Having the power supply unit inside the casing makes the physical design very neat and self-contained, but the interfaces on the back and underside of the case are more numerous than on most machines. This has meant that a large number of devices suitable for expanding the standard computer are available, including several makes of disk drive other than that manufactured specially for the BBC.

In addition to interfaces for disk drive, printer, and an analogue device such as a piece of laboratory equipment or measurement device, there is a facility for networking. This is ideal for classroom use because several users can share one disk drive or printer.

Finally there is 'The Tube' — a sophisticated interface for connecting an alternative micro-processor, either to achieve faster computing, or to run software written for other machines. However, few users seem to have taken advantage of this feature.



## BBC Model B Keyboard

The keyboard is a strong point of the BBC Model B, in terms of layout, facilities and quality of construction. The keys are properly sculptured, which means that even a touch typist would feel at home.

The arrow keys are for moving the cursor around the screen for editing text or programs.

The top row of 10 red programmable function keys are particularly useful for educational programs as the user simply has to pick the right answer from up to 10 possibilities.

A pleasing feature is the inclusion of three LEDs (Light Emitting Diodes) to indicate whether the cassette motor is running, and whether the Shift Lock and Capitals Lock Keys have been activated