

The
BBC Micro
An Expert Guide

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Contents

Preface	vii
1 The Hardware	1
2 BBC BASIC	22
3 The Machine Operating System	43
4 The Video Display	54
5 The Sound Generator	76
6 Interfacing	96
7 Introduction to Assembly Language	115
8 Assembly Language II	137
9 Postscript	153
Index	157

Preface

The subject of this book is the BBC Micro, its hardware and its software and it is aimed at anyone who has already started to plumb the depths of this fascinating machine. It is not an introduction to BASIC nor does it attempt to explain the fundamental hardware that goes to make up any computer. Instead it plunges straight into the complexities and intricacies of this very special micro.

The BBC Micro is a complex machine and it would be unreasonable to expect to understand it in one go. To appreciate the working of one part of the machine you have to understand its interaction with other parts and this, of course, implies knowledge of those other parts! Coming to terms with the BBC Micro is, therefore, very like solving a jigsaw puzzle - odd pieces start to make sense, then one or two fit together until the whole jigsaw is finished. The objective of this book is to help you to view the BBC Micro as a whole rather than just a collection of pieces.

Some of the chapters of this book are mainly about hardware and some are mainly about software. If you understand and enjoy hardware then don't give up on the software chapters - they will improve your appreciation of the hardware. Similarly, if you are a programmer, stray outside of your field and see what the hardware is about - you will find that it's not as difficult as it looks! A book of this sort, however, has to assume a certain amount of prior knowledge in its readers. This implies that to understand everything in every chapter you will need to know something about both hardware and software - not very much but something! My advice is to look up any areas that you feel unsure of in a general computer text book.

Material that is covered in the BBC User Guide is, as far as possible, not duplicated here. However, to make the book reasonably self-contained, some repetition has been unavoidable. Where this has happened, the information has been presented in a different way or commented on so as to add something to the User Guide.

The BBC Micro is such an interesting machine that even in a book of this length there must be more left unsaid than said! My apologies to anyone who feels that I have ignored some important feature in preference for something obvious, but choosing what is important is a matter of personal interest and deciding what is obvious is a matter of personal knowledge! My selection is necessarily incomplete and therefore cannot possibly please everybody all of the time.

Finally, let me say that the BBC Micro is, in my opinion, a machine that will be with us when others have decayed back to the sand that their silicon chips came from! It is an excellent machine. It is powerful enough for most applications, it is expandable to respond to the unforeseen needs of the future, and has enough depth to make it a constant source of interest. This must be a winning combination!

Grateful thanks are due to Chris Turner of Acorn, without whose help this book would have lacked many essential pieces of information and to Henry Budgett of Computing Today who encouraged me to tackle some of the BBC Micro's challenges. Chapters Four and Five of this book are based on material that first appeared in *Computing Today*.

Mike James