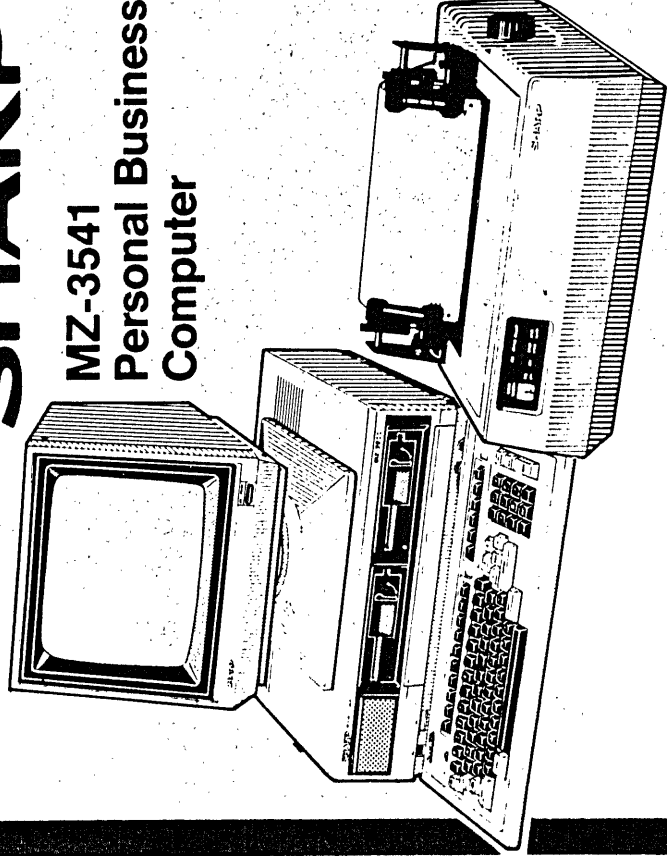


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HARDWARE REVIEW

The bottom line of the display nearly always has a menu selection, which coincides with the function keys below. The user may navigate the system by merely pressing the appropriate function key to register his or her choice on any screen. The software is set up in a tree structure, each selection leading the user to the next lower level along that branch. Pressing ESCAPE will always pop the user out of the level he is in, back to the previous one.

I-EDIT is a simple, cut-down text editor which allows the user to create, edit, print, and save short documents or notes. It offers automatic screen wrap-around and is compatible with the main word processor.

I-CAL provides a programmable printing calculator with the capability of saving calculations to tape. The computer actually draws a sort of calculator on the LCD screen.

I-COMM gives the user extensive control over the serial and RS232 interfaces. The two are different in this machine. The serial interface is really intended for connecting to a modem, an option in the United States. The I-Comm software may be used to connect the IS-11 to other computers. In America the I-TSS timesharing package allows terminal emulation for Infonet, The Source, and Dow Jones.

I-TRANS is an optional data conversion software program which provides compatibility with MS-DOS and CP/M programs such as Lotus 1 2 3, WordStar, Supercalc and Visicalc, dBase II. Another optional ROM cartridge features a word processor with full cut-and-paste and word-search facilities.

I found it a welcome change in the week I had the computer, to be freed of the normal ties of a computer system. To pop the IS-11 into my briefcase and bring it out for use at any time, anywhere, is at first a novel freedom. However, I fairly quickly found myself wishing for a better display, more speed, and a built-in language. The machine I had was a sample unit, and unfortunately no other options are available at the time of writing, so I am unable to report on the thermal printer and other software.

The manuals were also preliminary versions, lacking detail in some important areas, notably in the I-Comm section. The PIPS manual was reasonably detailed however, and featured lots of "frinstance" pictures of screen displays to help understanding the text.

HARDWARE REVIEW

viewing angle adjustment on the rear of the computer. I found that even with this control, the display was not easy to read, particularly in low light situations. The display has reference marks inscribed to the left and below, corresponding to lines and characters. I found the display very slow, but cannot say whether this is software or hardware (I suspect the latter). The display may be split up into eight defined windows, several of which can be viewed at once.

To the right of the display is the removable microcassette drive, fully software controlled. These little drives are magnificent examples of Japanese electronics prowess. It is a pity they are not available as a universal micro peripheral with parallel interface. This one operates at 2000 baud, and stores 128K bytes of data on a C30 microcassette. The keyboard is a full sized, fully featured unit, with a good feel to it. I did find that each keypress produced a faint "spring ring" sound which began to annoy me after a while. Along the top of the main keyboard are the escape and reset buttons, six function buttons, and four cursor keys.

The rear of the computer holds most of the input/output connectors: power and reset switches, AC adapter/battery charger socket, barcode reader socket, serial and RS232C interfaces, and parallel system interface. On the bottom surface are two indented connectors for the Centronics printer and numeric keypad. Under the cassette drive is a deep slot which takes the ROM cartridges.

Similar to most other lap portables, the IS-11 has low-power, CMOS memory supplied by rechargeable batteries. Switching the computer off stops only the processor and powers down the display and support systems. Beneath the

Microcomputer summary

- Name:** Sord IS11.
Manufacturer: Sord Computer Corporation, Japan.
Microprocessor: CMOS Z80A, 3.4MHz clock speed.
RAM: 32K, expandable to 64K.
Keyboard: 72-key standard, full travel ASC11, plus six function keys, upper/lower case, auto repeat on all keys.
Display: LCD display, 8 x 40 character lines, 256 x 64 graphics dots.
Input/Output: Built-in software-controlled FSK 2000 baud microcassette drive. Standard interfaces provided for: parallel and RS232C, second audio cassette port, parallel I/O port, Centronics printer port, numeric keypad port, ROM cartridge slot, bar-code reader port.
Languages: PIPS spreadsheet software, database software, word processor.
Options: 3.5 inch microfloppy disk drive (under development); CRT monitor interface (under development); 64K ROM software cartridges; add-on numeric keypad with 16 function keys; add-on 40 character 10 cps thermal printer; bar-code reader; acoustic coupler.
Cost: \$2200.

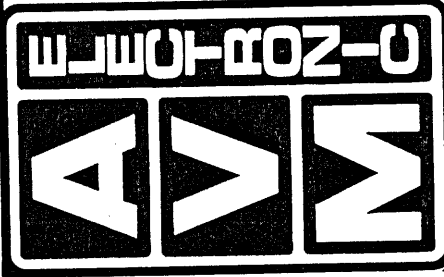
Review machine supplied by Sord Computers, Ltd, Wellington.

machine is a switch labelled BACKUP, which controls the memory power supply. The batteries are good for about eight hours average use, but this depends on how much the cassette drive is used. An "L" appears on the screen and the supplied battery charger must be connected up overnight.

The memory is partitioned into files; the number and sizes are specified by the user. These files may be either data files, edit files, or calculator files, produced by the relevant software. Should the user run out of memory for a new file, older ones resident in memory may be transferred to tape to free up the memory.

The Sord IS-11 does not have any programming language built in. I think this detracts from it. However, for a businessman intending to use this computer, it probably will not matter. I understand a version of Microsoft BASIC is to be released shortly on a plug-in ROM cartridge.

PIPS is probably the major software tool in the IS-11, and this is a very powerful spreadsheet program. Like all spreadsheets, the data is organised in tables, and these may be manipulated in a variety of ways. Multi-key sorting is provided, data may be graphed and displayed in either pie or bar graph formats — amazing to see on a small LCD screen!



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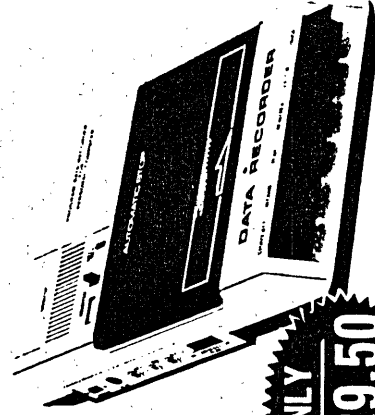
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