

IBM ANNOUNCES JX

IBM Australia has extended its range of microcomputers by announcing the JX, a low-cost desktop computer. The JX will now be the company's entry-level micro, or as the latest PR jargon terms it, 'personal computing solution'.

Brian Finn, Managing Director of IBM Australia, regards the JX as a significant step forward from earlier PC products, combining a smaller, more efficient design with the power to handle business and graphics applications. "The IBM JX was designed with the modern businessperson in mind, but thanks to the wide range of software available for users at any level, it has a place in education and the home as well."

The JX is available in three models. The JX1 is aimed at the classroom crowd, with 64 Kbyte RAM, two cartridge slots, a 30 cm colour display and detachable compact keyboard — for \$2115. The 'compact' keyboard comes without a separate numeric keypad; you have to get the 'full' keyboard to get the normal complement of computer keys.

The JX2, suitable for home and small business use, has 128 Kbytes of RAM, full keyboard, colour display, one 9 cm microfloppy drive and a price tag of \$2861 — for very small business use indeed, it seems. The top-of-the-line JX3 doubles the RAM of the JX2 and comes with two disk drives for \$3365.

Over 100 software packages are already available for the JX, including the IBM Assistant and Displaywrite series. The JX can also run a number of IBM PC programs by adding an optional 10 cm disk drive or by converting the programs to 9 cm format where possible.

The JX is built around the same processor as the PC — the Intel 8088 operating at 4.77 MHz, and the microfloppies have the same storage capacity (360 Kbytes) as standard 13 cm IBM diskettes. Operating systems include DOS 2.10 or power-on BASIC, with interpreted BASIC built into the ROM of all models. The ROM is impressive, using a 1 megabit ROM chip.



It's possible to set up a cluster system of JXs, with an absolute maximum of 64 micros per cluster (although in practice, it's unlikely this number will prove workable). JX clusters can be built around a PC XT or AT as the host computer, with shared printer and files.

At the quoted prices, the JX is certainly not a cheap proposition, but with the restructuring of IBM's prices on the XT (down 7.5 per cent) and the PC (up 10 per cent), the company now has a line of personal computers which ranges from a little over \$2000 to around \$12,000. The JX3 scrapes in just below the basic PC without monitor, while the top spot is occupied by the 512 Kbyte AT with 20 Mbyte hard disk. □