Launch of the Quantum Leap

THE QL, the new Sinclair Research £399 machine for the serious user, is set to take the upper end of the computer market by storm. The 32-bit machine uses a 68008 processor and has 128K RAM as standard. It also has a typewriter-style keyboard, something the Spectrum lacked.

The customer will also receive four software packages, which include a database, word processor, graphics package and spreadsheet. All the software is on Microdrive. A startling feature of the new computer is its lack of an ordinary cassette recorder port. Sinclair did that deliberately and claims that the Microdrives are more powerful than those available for the Spectrum. They can access at least 100K and the average access time is 3.5 seconds.

As well as using an upgraded version of Basic, called Super-Basic, the QL also has an operating system, called QDOS, which contains routines to control graphics and other processes in the machine, including operation of the twin Microdrives. There are several graphics modes and the screen display can use up to 32K of available memory at any time.

Windows can be defined in the screen display and various independent tasks can be performed within the windows. That shows that the machine is multi-tasking, which means that it can be made to run several programs at the same time.

Sinclair has matched the QL against other microcomputers on the market, including the BBC Micro. At the launch Sir Clive Sinclair said that to make the Acorn machine comparable with the QL would cost approximately £1,800.

Sinclair Research is expecting big demand for the new machine but stresses that it will not take the place of the Spectrum at the lower end of the market. Managing director Nigel Searle said the machine will be aimed at business and education users, as well as the serious student.