

Commodore: Pet

Commodore Pet (Personal Electronic Transactor) was the first computer to be produced by Commodore, the company. It was introduced in January 1977 and five months later it had hit the shelves. It was very well received by people especially in the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom. It was the top seller in these markets.

Initially, Commodore had planned to produce a calculator. After much debate between the top heads of the company, it was concluded that calculators were a dead end and instead the company will focus its energy and resources in building a 'real' machine.

In order to be able to show off their 'real' machine at the Consumer Electronic Show, two people put their heads together, Leonard Tramiel and Chuck Peddle, to produce the prototype of the first ever all in one home computer. It took these two just six months to produce a computer that was going to be lay the foundation for their later models.

The first computer from Commodore was named 'Pet 2001'. This was a very simple computer with 4 KB of RAM and a 1 MHz MOS Technology 6502 CPU. Later models such as Pet 2001-8N, Pet 2001-16N and Pet 2001-32N had 8Kb, 16KB and 32KB of RAM respectively.

The Commodore Pet gained wide spread popularity specifically in the education sector. Its metal body as well as the all in one design made it perfect for rigorous use in classrooms. Since disk drives and printers were very expensive at that time, the IEEE port allowed the sharing of these resources, making it affordable for schools.

In Europe Commodore Pet was marketed as CBM (Commodore Business Machine) because there was already a company there that had taken up this name. There, apart from the initial CBM 8000, later models were also released following the same series such as CBM 8032 and CBM 8096. These had different amounts of RAM and also had various upgrades such as an inbuilt cassette recorder.

In spite of stiff competition from Apple, the Commodore Pet series proved to be a success for the company. The name 'Pet' was chosen because it gave the machine a humble and friendly image.

Many collection hobbyists and professionals of today (perhaps teenagers of that time) enjoy a Commodore Pet sitting in their places. A large number of people learnt programming from it and therefore it gives them a chance to relive their memories.