

# Home computers follow affluent trail

By Gary M. Cates  
staff writer

Personal computer businesses appear to be programmed for success. Local retailers report climbing sales which are a reflection of the nationwide boom in home computer sales.

Some 20 percent of monthly sales at the Canon Radio Shack, on Ford and Sheldon, are personal computers, according to store manager Balha Shim-mell.

"This compares to a year ago when computer sales were at zero percent. The home computers are very popular," she said.

Radio Shack, part of the Tandy Corp., pulled in 23 percent of the \$2.2-billion worldwide market for personal computers last year.

The growth of Apple Computer, a California-based firm, is a prime example of the growing interest in home computers.

Apple was founded in 1976 by Steven

Jobs, who set up shop in a bedroom and garage. Just six years later Apple is expected to have sales of \$600 million and join the ranks of the Fortune 500 companies.

In 1977 Apple sales were \$2.7 million, which compares to 1980 when the company made \$200 million.

The 26-year-old Jobs has opened a market which has sent the larger computer companies scrambling to produce a personal computer to compete with him.

Xerox, IBM and Hewlett-Packard currently are marketing their own versions of the home computer.

"I WOULD say the personal computers have been super successful. It's a boom situation," said Bill Evans, manager of the Radio Shack Computer Center in Livonia, at Seven Mile and Farmington roads.

The variety of computers available for home use is vast. A person could buy a system to perform almost any

function they desire.

Personal computers are being bought for playing video games to doing the bookkeeping, inventory and mailing for a moderate-size business.

The price range for personal computers goes from \$300 for a Commodore Vic, to \$900 for an Atari 400, to \$2,200 for an Apple, according to Tracy Flora of the J. Malcolm Flora Co., a computer manufacturing representative firm in Plymouth.

The personal computer prices compare to industry computer prices which range from \$2,000 to \$60,000, she said.

Personal computers break down to three categories.

"There are computers bought for

sheer recreational uses, some for recreational and serious use, and then those bought for business use," Evans said.

If someone is interested in buying a

personal computer the first step is to decide what the computer will be used for.

THE RECREATIONAL buyers want a computer which they can play with: video games, graphic displays, puzzles, etc.

The key items to look for when buying a

personal computer for recreational use are: making sure it can be hooked up to a home television set, color capability, and use of software (pre-programmed cartridges, tapes and discs).

A person wanting a computer for recreation and some serious use wants a computer which can be programmed for household financing, making grocery lists, financial analysis, etc.

This type of system will allow the user to do check-book balancing, stock market analysis, hook-up to information services provided by phone, and use as a timer. Personal computers can be used for turning on appliances, lights, garage doors, answering telephone calls, etc.

The key features to look for in this category are: a unit which has a full-size black and white television screen built in, disc-drive capability (which increases memory and the amount of software which can be used), a unit which can be transported and can be added onto in the future (for such things as phone hook-ups, line printers, etc.).

Business-size personal computers are bought for increased memory capabilities, interfacing connecting) with larger computer systems, word processing, mailing and letter capable printers.

The key features to look for in buying for business purposes are: advanced printers, bigger black and white monitors, hard-disc capabilities, graphic capabilities and interfacing capabilities.

The difference between personal computers and industrial computers is in memory capabilities, available software, function capability and ability to add on to the system, Flora said.

## Thompson appointed to PR committee

Noel Carpenter, chairman of the public relations committee for the Specialty Equipment Marketing Association (SEMA), has announced the appointment of John R. Thompson to the committee.

Thompson is president of Thompson Advertising Productions of Farmington Hills. The agency represents a number of companies in the performance market, including Chrysler Corp.'s direct connection program, Air Lift Co., Spartan Plastics and Trick Titanium.

Thompson's background in the performance industry goes back 20 years, Carpenter said. He was chosen for his experience and Midwestern influences in the market.



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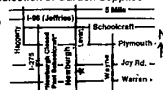
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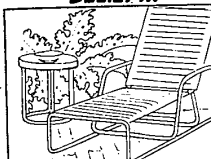
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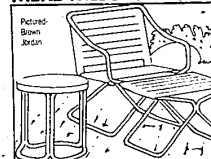
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