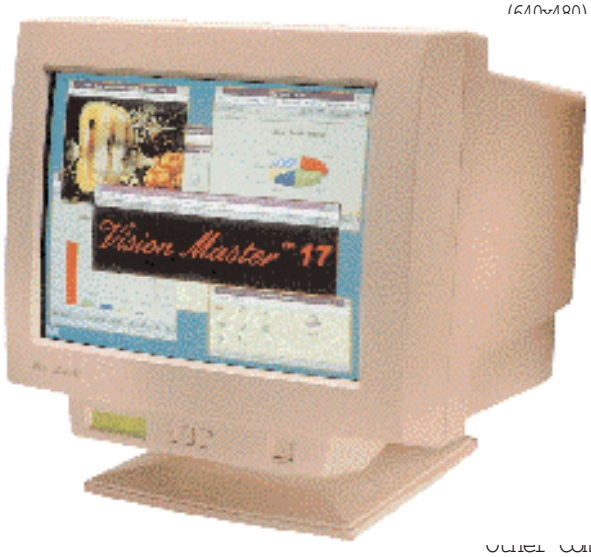
The Idek Vision Master 17

David Spencer looks at an alternative to Acorn s AKF85 monitor

There is nothing better to bring out the best in your new Risc PC than a big 17 monitor. Not only does such a monitor give much improved display capabilities, it also looks the part sitting next to your computer. This is no doubt why Acorn chose to offer a badged Philips Brilliance monitor as an option with the Risc PC. Unfortunately, though, it s an option with a price - an extra £400 over the smaller AKF60.



Vision Master

The Vision Master 17 is a 1 screen monitor that offers an alternative to the AKF85. The spec is impressive as well: with a bandwidth of 135MHz, a 0.26mm dot pitch and sync ranges of 23.5-86KHz and 50-120Hz, it comes out marginally better on paper than the AKF85. And it s cheaper too - just an extra £335 when bought with a Risc PC. If bought separately, the cost is £585 which compares very favourably with the £999 price tag of the AKF85.

Like the AKF85, the Idek stores all the picture settings automatically. Therefore, the number of controls is rather sparse. Indeed, besides the on/off switch there are just three buttons, labelled +, - and menu, which sit alongside a 16 character LCD display. By using just these buttons, various display parameters can be set up such as horizontal and vertical sizes and positions, colour balance, and pincushioning and trapezoidal correction. The menu system also provides control over the input source (either a VGA connector or separate BNC sockets), auto power-off (see below) and degaussing.

Once set up for a particular mode, the monitor automatically stores the configuration so that next time that mode is selected the same settings are restored. Up to twenty-one sets of settings can be stored in this way.

The Idek supports a power saving mode that can be configured via the menu system. In this mode, if the computer blanks the screen for a predetermined length of time (between five minutes and an hour), the monitor will enter a power down mode which reduces power consumption to only 6% of its normal value. The monitor can be turned back on by flicking the on/off switch.

Under Test

In use (with the same definition file as for the AKF85), the Idek coped very well with the more exacting modes such as 1024x768 and 1280x1024, locking straight on to the picture with no problems at all. However, in standard VGA mode (640x480) things seemed to go , with the screen switching on and off every few seconds. Changing to a frame rate of 60Hz cured this. In fact, all that's needed is a new monitor definition file, and Acorn has now provided one which is supplied by your dealer when you buy the Idek.

In terms of picture ality, the Idek compares favourably with the is certainly usable in screen modes without any er or eye-strain.

Other Computers

Although I m sure the Idek will be most popular with Risc PC users, it is compatible with any other Acorn computer, or indeed a standard PC. For the newer machines, which have a standard 15-pin VGA connector, the monitor can just be plugged straight in. Older machines will require an adaptor, and may need some link changes in the computer and some reconfiguration. You must also remember that, like just about every other top-end monitor, the Idek cannot sync down to the TV-standard modes such as modes 12 and 15.