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Description

Working MITS Altair 8800 S/N 223081K with modern accessories, working software and about a foot high stack of documentation. Comes with a Zenith monochrome green monitor to display the Polymorphics Video Terminal Interface and an embedded controller project to replace the now unavailable parallel ASCII keyboard with a common pc AT/PS2 keyboard. That is a small external box that makes a parallel keyboard out of a pc keyboard for the Altair parallel port. Unit has a MITS CPU Board Rev 0 with an NEC cpu chip, 64K memory, the Polymorphics Video card, an 88-ACR cassette I/O card, a parallel port board for the keyboard (6520 PIA) and a homebrew multifunction card with a TMS-9918 video chip, boot prom and two channels of DAC. Counting the DACs going to an oscilloscope, that make three sources of video. You can program the machine with one monitor and watch the 9918 video on another. The TI graphics has color, sprites, layers and programming manuals are available. Two of the address switches (0 and 1) were replaced in the 90's and are shorter than the rest.

See more photos at: <http://musicriver.homeunix.com:8737/altair/>

Documentation includes 11 issues of MITS Computer Notes, all of 1976 except for April, the original MITS binder with assembly instructions, schematics and operators manual. There is an Altair Basic Reference Manual with an Extended Disk Basic section, and a genuine MITS 4K BASIC Rev 3.2 cassette tape. An interesting paragraph in the manual

states, "If any immediate problems with MITS Software are encountered, feel free to give us a call at (505) 265-7553. The Software Department is at Ext. 3; and the joint authors of the ALTAIR BASIC Interpreter, Bill Gates, Paul Allen and Monte Davidoff, will be glad to assist you." If you know your history, you know what that 'software department' became, especially when Pertec later purchased MITS but the 'software department' turned out to be a separate entity in court, or at least Pertec did not get the rights to Bill's BASIC. Be aware that a lot of the papers have a musty basement smell to them, but the Computer itself has been kept in normal room temperature/humidity environment. There are no serious cabinet problems, just a spot or two on the power cord where I put the soldering iron while building it.

This computer was built by myself in the winter of 75/76 while listening to Steely Dan records (The Royal Scam) and used heavily about 4 years afterwards, so all the flaky hardware has been weeded out. It was built on the 'kit a month' plan where you send in \$60 and MITS sent a part of the machine, like the manuals, the case and power supply, memory, etc. That fit my after school minimum wage job budget. The last kit was the CPU chip, but by that time you could get an 8080 for about \$30 so MITS never got my last payment. That's why it has a NEC and not an Intel chip. Comes with the NEC 8080 booklet. In the 90's I rescued as much software off of cassette tape as possible, and wrote fresh dumps to computer wav files. There is 4K and 8K BASIC, a FORTH created from Byte's book, "Threaded Interpretive Languages" (TIL) which was used with the TI graphics card. I created a system called Program Development System (PDS) cobbled together from Scelbi monitor routines, Byte's Video Display Oriented (VDO) text editor, Scelbi assembler and includes a single step debugger created from a Byte article on an 8080 simulator written in 8080 assembly. I have about 42 programs and projects saved in wav and mp3 files. There's even SpaceWar from a Byte magazine article which has awesome smooth gravity effect on an oscilloscope but you will have to build a couple of controllers to play it (four momentary switches for rotate right/left, thrust and fire torpedo).

With everything as it is, a typical session goes like this:

```
Hold up STOP and RESET and flick on the power switch.
Toggle in a two byte program to clear memory (in octal now):
000:000 063
000:001 307
```

Then hit RESET and RUN. It will zero out memory and run into the boot prom and ask for a START address, END address and TEST byte on the video terminal. To load PDS enter (hex) C400 start, E000 end and TEST byte 00, then play the wav file and hit the space bar. The 88-ACR wants very loud audio - we had to overdrive almost to clipping to get those cheap audio cassette decks to work. Today, playing audio from a computer sound card software loads like a dream. They run at 300 baud so loading takes a few minutes. Once that loads the machine HALTS, hit STOP/RESET, EXAMINE DC00 and hit RUN, the monitor '>' prompt appears on the terminal. Now you can load 8K BASIC by typing 'R' <enter> and playing the audio. After that loads you can hit STOP, EXAMINE 0000 and hit RUN and the BASIC OK prompt appears.

```
? 10.02 - 10
.0199995
```

Yep, that's Micro-Soft BASIC.

Now you can CLOAD "O" and play the Othello audio file and that will load and you have a good BASIC game running on vintage hardware. It's been waiting for my move for the last three hours while typing this up (and retyping after ebay's shipping calculator crashed my Firefox browser, sigh). Or, from the monitor you can enter the editor, type in some assembly code, exit and save it, then make an assembly listing to check for errors, then assemble to memory and then single step thru or just Goto and run and hope a logic error does not wipe out everything in memory. So you have editor/assemble/debugger all in memory at the same time to work without having to load separate modules for each function.

Please ask any questions you have and I will answer them. I will also provide email support. Everyone knows MITS did not have the best design or use the best parts at the time, and of course 30 year old microelectronics comes with NO guarantee or warranty. It's working right now and will take tender loving care to keep it running. Things like plugging in the keyboard cable backwards will fry the parallel keyboard converter (puts 8Vdc on an input pin, which I just did and had to burn a new controller. So I put a label on that). Guesstimate about 50 pounds in three separate parcels. The main unit will be carefully double boxed and insured. It's my baby until you accept delivery. Shipping CONUS only.

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