

The Tramiel clan extended the Atari range with a `Jackintosh`. Despite similar technology, the 520 ST and its variants couldn't match the audio and visuals of Commodore's Amiga.

Lo'Ann! What's happened?
Where's she gone?

French adventure artists dropped 8-Bit in favor of the ST: Future Wars by newcomers Delphine.

Atari ST

USA, 1985

Units sold: 6 Million
Number of games: 1,000
Game storage: Disk
Games developed until: 1994
★★★★★



Musicians and DTP artists bought their Atari ST with the 12" monitor SM 146 and got a small, but crisp picture.

In 1984, while devising its 16-Bit computer range, Atari invested in the Amiga company, owned by ex-employee Jay Miner. However, a bullish negotiating-style drove the hardware team to competitor Commodore, which promptly swallowed Amiga and released a computer of the same name simultaneously to the Atari ST.

Miner's graphics chips were missing from the ST, but other than that it was similar to the Amiga: Both machines used a Motorola 68000 CPU, 3.5" disks and a mouse as input device, and both enticed punters with a graphical user interface. GEM was the name given to Atari's GUI with its

small drive and drawer symbols accompanied by the `Tramiel Operating System' (TOS). The Atari ST was cheaper than other 16-Bit machines and was supported by many games manufacturers. 1987 turned out to be its most successful year: In the US, the real-time RPG **Dungeon Master** was released, along with Dan `Choplifter' Gorlins' **Typhoon Thompson** and **Midi Maze** which networked 16 computers anticipating the deathmatches of the '90s. After that, the scene shifted to Europe. Prominent programmers like the Bitmap Brothers (**Speedball**, **Cadaver**), Eric Chahi (**Another World**), the adventure specialists Magnetic Scrolls as well as 3D pioneers Paul Woakes (**Damocles**) and Jez

San (**Starglider**) supported the platform right into the '90s. Germany was another stronghold for Atari, where Thalion developed mainly for the ST, releasing huge RPGs (**Dragonflight**) and fast action games (**Wings of Death**).

By 1990, the Amiga overtook the Atari as a graphics and games machine, but due to its MIDI port, the ST remained the first choice for professional musicians. Similarly, small DTP offices used it as an affordable alternative to Macs. The final variant was the 68030-driven Falcon in 1992.

New wine in old bottles: The last ST compatible was called Falcon and was audio-visually more powerful than its predecessors, though it wasn't a success.



Dungeon Master was a revolution. If you didn't own an ST, you had to wait ages for a conversion of this realtime expedition.



Variants and successors

520ST	1985	The 512 K ST first shipped with a monochrome monitor, an external power supply as well as TOS on disk. It was replaced by the 260ST and 520ST+ (1 MB) and was also available as STm (with TV modulator) and STf (internal floppy drive).
260ST	1986	This short-lived 520ST twin (also with 512 K, external floppy) was shipped only in Europe.
1040ST	1986	A 1 MB computer with TOS in ROM and internal power supply. An `m' in the name stands for TV modulator; `f' for a sideward floppy drive.
Mega ST	1987	A desktop PC with separate keyboard, integrated floppy, up to 4 MB memory as standard and two new chips for graphics acceleration. Professional add-ons were hard-drive and removable media with up to 60 MB as well as a DTP-suitable 19" monitor.
1040STe	1989	The 520ST successor was enhanced in terms of graphics (4,096 colour palette, hardware scrolling, Blitter) and memory, shipping with 1 to 4 MB, in the UK and France along with 512 MB RAM as 520STe. Apart from two ordinary 9-pin ports Atari used its own 12-pin controller ports.
STacy	1989	The laptop with monochrome LCD, mini-trackball, 4 MB RAM and 40 MB hard-drive was replaced in the early '90s by a lighter, just as unsuccessful ST-Book (no LCD backlight, no floppy).
Atari TT	1990	A compatible successor with new 68030 CPU (2 MB RAM, up to 8 MB on top of the TT's RAM) and better graphic modes: 320x480 in 256 of 4096 colours, 640x480 in 16 colours and a monochrome mode in 1280x960 pixels. It was replaced by the Falcon.
Mega STe	1991	Mega-ST successor with separate keyboard, a CPU clocked at 16 MHz, cache and an optional co-processor.
Falcon	1992	A keyboard computer with integrated floppy, 68030 CPU as well as a programmable DSP, 4 to 14 MB RAM and a graphics resolution of 640x480 pixels in 16-Bit colours.



In the UK, most games were developed for both ST and Amiga: A cheering Speedball 2 player from 1990.