

Sharp challenged NEC's dominance in Japan with superior graphics and sound, but never brought the most powerful 68000-chip games computers into the west.

Sharp X68000

Japan, 1987

Units sold: Unknown
 Number of games: 200
 Game storage: Disk
 Games developed until: 1994
 ★★★★★

The battle of home micros was nearing its end. In the US, Atari was knocked for six, in Japan, Sharp lost out to other platforms. The MZ was no longer of relevance, the hobby series X1 eclipsed by NEC and Fujitsu. To replace those oldies, Sharp once more cooperated with software-manufacturer Hudson in the design of a 16-Bit computer.

The first X68000 retailed for 370,000 yen and packed substantial power in an imposing case-design. Next to an RGB monitor, stood two slim mini-towers with AV and controller ports and volume control embedded in their bases. Computer and components were completely black, although Sharp later shipped grey versions. Sharp utilised a Motorola 68000 CPU, a chip that was already employed in ST, Mac and Amiga computers for some years. Sharp's

68000 however, was clocked faster. In terms of sound and graphics, the Sharp computer was also better than its western relatives: With a maximum resolution of 768 x 512 pixels and a palette of 65,536 colours, up to 128 sprites, parallax scrolling and a Yamaha synthesizer, Sharp was leaning towards the state of the art in arcade technology. No other console or computer could compete with this kind of raw power.

Bitmap objects were rotated and scaled effortlessly by the X68000, making faithful conversions of Sega hits **Afterburner** and **Space Harrier** a piece of cake. Optimized 2D action (**Parodius**, **Final Fight**) and, of course, a bulk of fantasy RPGs and adventures were released. Apart from arcade hits by Konami, Capcom and SNK, original games



Märchen Maze was a weird Alice in Wonderland interpretation by Namco. As some games were harmless and cute...



...others were sexy: Shangri-la 2 mixed Langrisser strategy with softcore pictures. For adults only.



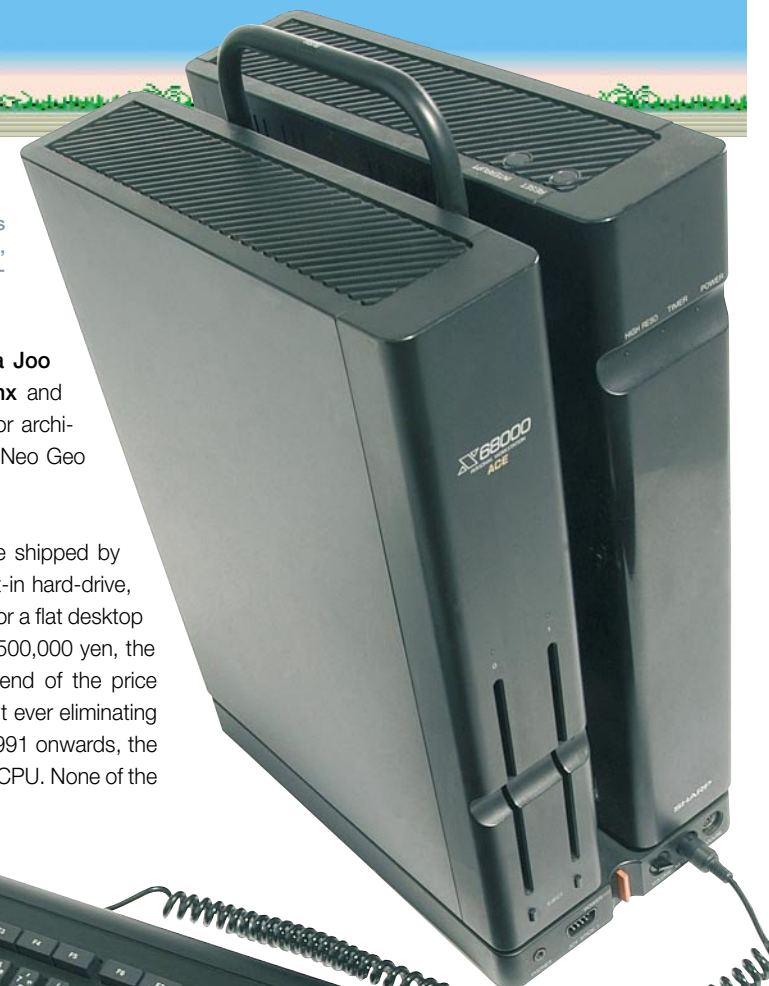
The second series was grey and had a CPU-upgrade. As always AV- and controller-ports were found at the mini-tower's front.



The last home computer by Sharp was as beautiful as the NeXT, elegant on the outside, more powerful than any other MC68000-based computer inside.

such as the Castlevania episode **Akuma Joo Dracula** and shoot 'em ups like **Phalanx** and **Thunderforce 2** made use of the superior architecture. The last game released was the Neo Geo conversion **Viewpoint** in 1995.

A dozen of hardware configurations were shipped by Sharp until 1990: The HD came with built-in hard-drive, while Pro dropped the mini-tower design for a flat desktop case. With prices between 300,000 and 500,000 yen, the Sharp computers were sold at the top end of the price range and had established a niche without ever eliminating the more conservative NEC-PCs. From 1991 onwards, the Sharps were shipped with an accelerated CPU. None of the models ever became available in Europe.



Variants and successors

X68000 (Ace)	1987	The Sharp-PC made its debut as a slim mini-twin-optional fitted monitor. From 1989, it was shipped in a tower, with an optional fitted monitor. From 1989, it was shipped in a tower, with an optional fitted monitor. From 1989, it was shipped in a tower, with an optional fitted monitor. Overall, 13 different configurations based on the 10-MHz CPU were released.
X68000 XVI	1991	This was a new series with the CPU accelerated to 16 MHz and SX Windows installed, a 3.5" Floppy drive and an 80 MB hard-drive.
X68030	1993	The last version had the more powerful MC68EC030 CPU (25 MHz) and at least 12 MB. In March, Sharp shipped the X68030 equipped with a 5.25-inch floppy drive (The HD version with 80 MB hard-drive), in May came two models with 3.5" drives (Compact).

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