The Evolution of the Microprocessor

The microprocessor is one of the unsung heroes of the modern era. Like the car designer whose vehicle gives the racing driver glory, the microprocessor makes quite incredible things possible all over the world. Each year we benefit from faster and more efficient performance which improves not just computing, but also numerous fields from retail and industry to agriculture and vehicle safety. This year, the humble microprocessor celebrates its 40th birthday. Since 1971, it has become the brain of literally millions of devices - without the microprocessor they would not have existed.

Let's take a look at some of the devices the microprocessor has powered over the past 40 years
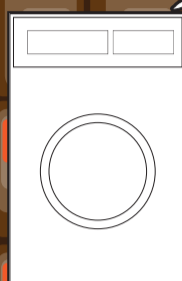
1971 — Busicom Calculator
The Unicom 141P* calculator was one of the very first devices to feature a microprocessor. Computing as we know it started here…

1978 — Washing machine
The first microchip-controlled washing machines came onto the market, showing the diverse usages of the new technology

1977 — Commodore PET*
The PET is widely acknowledged as the first all-in-one home computer
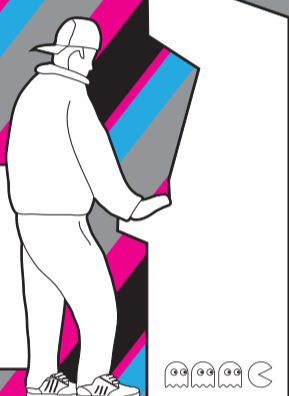
1981 — Osborne 1* laptop
With a 5" screen, and weighing 10.7kg, it really was the 'great' grandfather of modern laptops

1986 — Nintendo NES*
The gaming industry was revitalised by consoles such as the Nintendo Entertainment System

1980 — Arcade mania
Namco introduced Pac-Man* in the arcades of the US and sparked a huge craze

1997 — MP3 Player
The way we listen to music was forever changed in the late 1990s with the first MP3 players

1999 — BlackBerry*
The smartphone revolution kicked off when RIM introduce the Blackberry 850
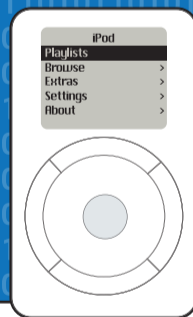
1991 — Computing democratised
Business and personal computing exploded with a wide range of desktops, laptops and even early tablets

2002 — Microsoft Windows* Tablet
Almost a decade before the consumer obsession with tablets, businesses were using them for more functional tasks

2001 — Apple iPod*
The iPod was released, and the future of MP3 as the music format of choice is set in stone

2008 — Netbook
Netbooks were introduced as small and lightweight devices for completing simple tasks and viewing media and internet content on the go

2010 — Apple iPad*
Tablets hit the consumer mainstream with the launch of the iPad

2011 — Digital Signage
Digital signage is but one of a vast number of new uses for the microprocessor. Intelligent, internet-connected devices are increasingly found in everyday life – from industry and retail to agriculture and vehicles

2011 — Ultrabook™
The evolution of the PC takes another big step as stylish Ultrabook devices push forward mobile, high performance computing

(intel)