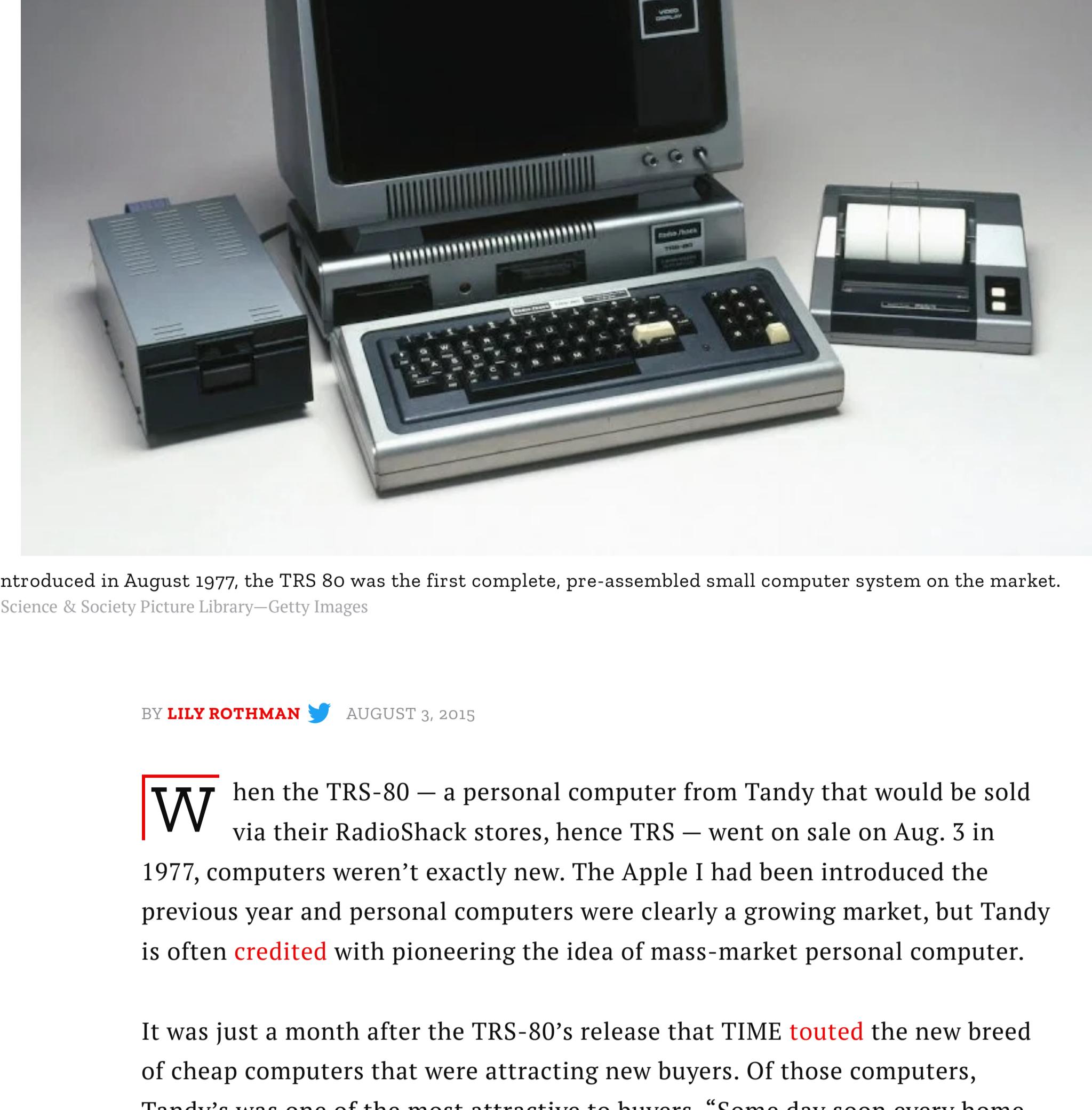


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HISTORY The Personal Computer That Beat Apple (For a While)



Introduced in August 1977, the TRS 80 was the first complete, pre-assembled small computer system on the market.

Science & Society Picture Library—Getty Images

BY LILY ROTHMAN AUGUST 3, 2015

When the TRS-80 — a personal computer from Tandy that would be sold via their RadioShack stores, hence TRS — went on sale on Aug. 3 in 1977, computers weren't exactly new. The Apple I had been introduced the previous year and personal computers were clearly a growing market, but Tandy is often credited with pioneering the idea of mass-market personal computer.

It was just a month after the TRS-80's release that TIME touted the new breed of cheap computers that were attracting new buyers. Of those computers, Tandy's was one of the most attractive to buyers. "Some day soon every home will have a computer," Byron Kirkwood, a Dallas microcomputer retailer, was quoted as saying. "It will be as standard as a toilet."

By 1981, that prediction was on its way to coming true. TIME reported that the market for personal computers was worth about \$1 billion, the vast majority of which was controlled by a few companies. One of them was Apple, which had become a well-known company. A 1980 stock offering had been a Wall Street hit; the Apple II, though it went for more than \$1,400, was a hit too.

But Apple wasn't first on TIME's list. That place of honor went to Tandy:

The Fort Worth-based Tandy Corp. has the broadest reach of any computer manufacturer through its 8,012 Radio Shack stores. The firm introduced its first small computer, the TRS-80, in 1977. A newer version of the TRS-80 (popular models now cost \$999) has become the largest-selling computer of all time, and Tandy now commands 40% of the small-computer market. Tandy recently introduced the first pocket computer, which shows only one line of information and sells for \$249.

But, especially in the fast-moving tech market, few things last forever. Tandy eventually stopped going by that name, switching to RadioShack. RadioShack filed for bankruptcy in February.

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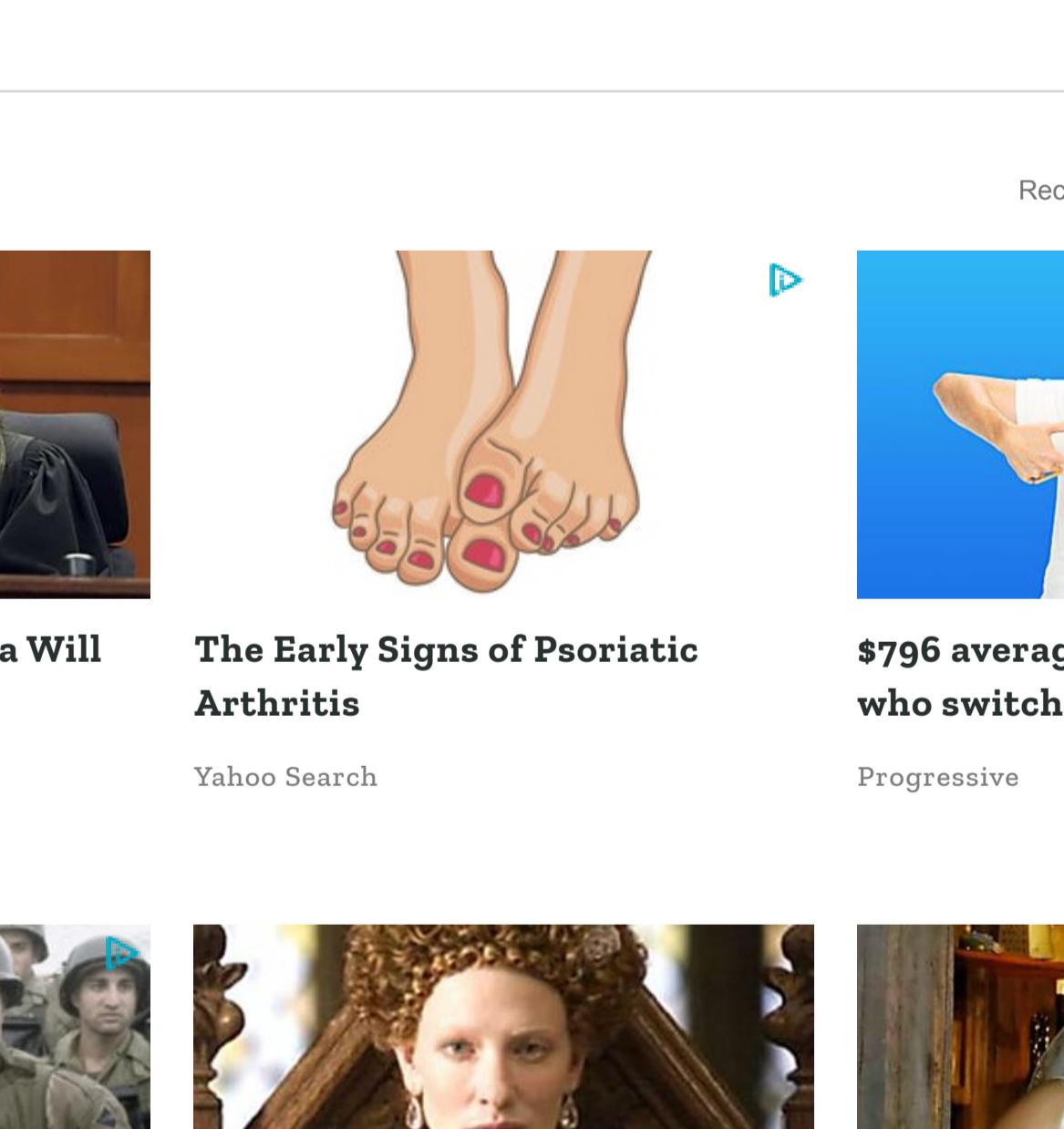
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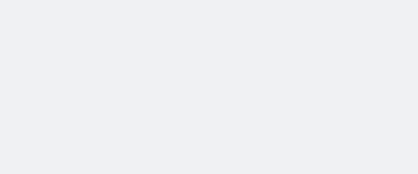


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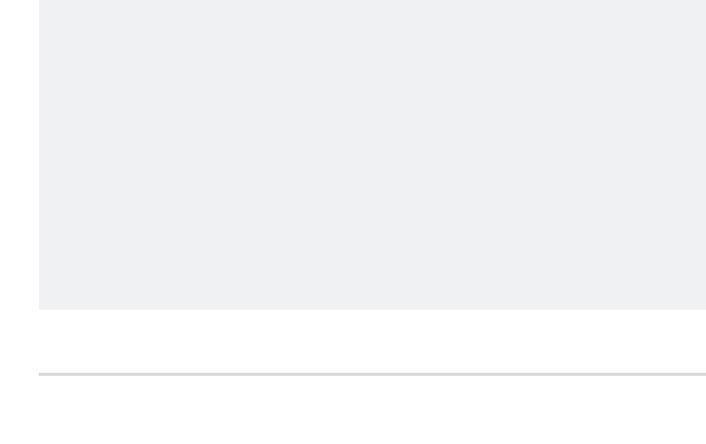
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WRITE TO LILY ROTHMAN AT LILY.ROTHMAN@TIME.COM.

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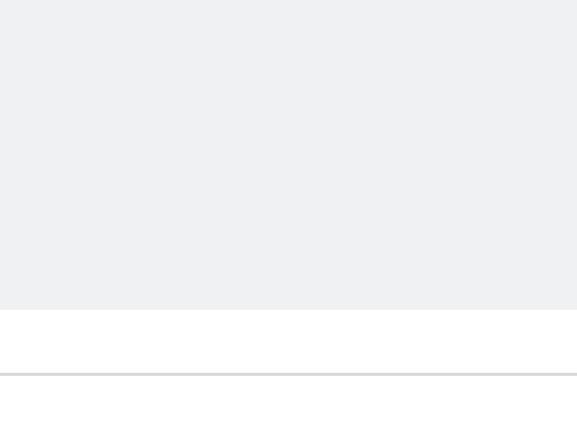


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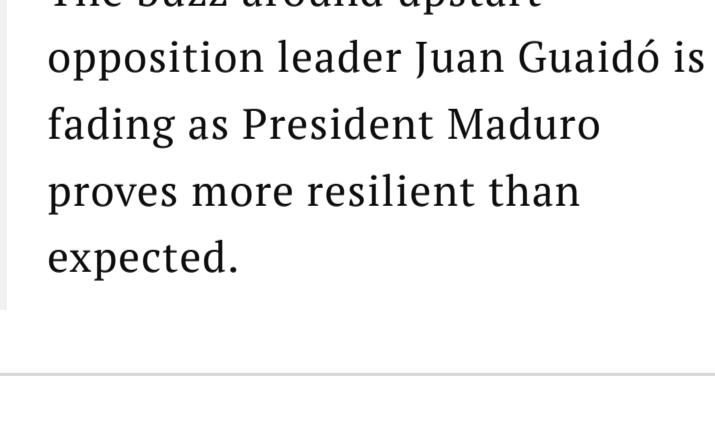
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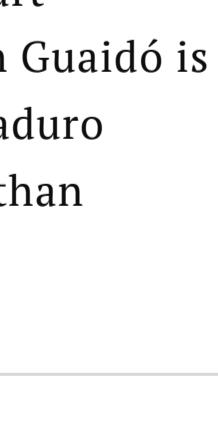
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