

EARLY HOME RACING

For Christmas 1975, Atari released 'Pong' for us to play at home (well they did in America - Europe had already had a few analog variations of pong). Immediately a flurry of competition ensued from literally dozens of manufacturers throughout America and Europe. To reduce costs, various chip manufacturers created what became known as 'pong on a chip' - ie all the electronics required were on a single off-the-shelf chip.

A lot of handheld and television games appeared and the intense competition led to a diversity of products such as shooting games and pong variations. Unsurprisingly (you could have guessed couldn't you!) there were racing games available. There were only a few variations of the games however and the manufacturers simply used the chips in their own various machines.

Video Action IV:INDY 500

Tele-Games Speedway

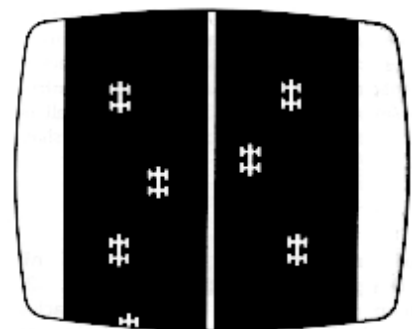
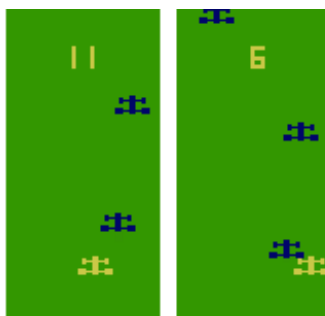


In 1976, Omnetics launched a new type of chip, the F4301. It offered two PONG variants and two car racing games. They were colour games only where the host hardware allowed. The games included multiplayer and variable speed. Universal Research used this chip in their famous "Video Action and Video Action IV: Indy 500" systems which were released in 1976. Atari also used it in their Speedway and Speedway IV games. This was sold by 'Sears' the large American stores under the brand 'Tele-Games'. The game was essentially Gran Trak 10 at home. Both Sears and Universal sold two versions because one had built in controllers (four player) and the other had separate paddles (two player).

The box and cartridge for Course de Voitures

Race (Colour)

Race (Black & White)



In 1976 General Instruments also brought out a chip for car fans—the AY-3-8603. It produced a game called "Race", "Grand Prix" or "Course de Voitures", depending on where the game was sold. The game is a vertically scrolling 'dodge 'em up'. It has some opponent cars coming down the screen. The player has to race as long as possible without colliding with the opponent cars. The chip itself also included sound effects to save manufacturers bolting on additional chips or components. It was some years behind arcade games of the time and in fact nothing that couldn't be done on the VCS. What it did was provide manufacturers an easy game which were cheaper than VCS.