

Speed Freak

Vectorbeam

Speedfreak

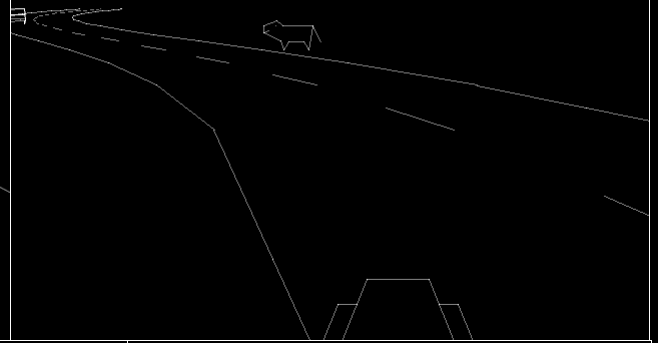
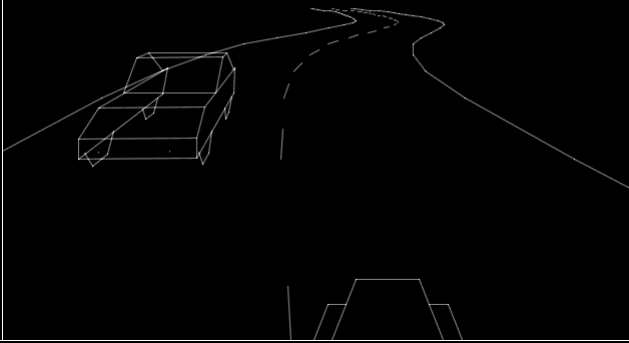
SCORE
006

108

VECTORBEAM

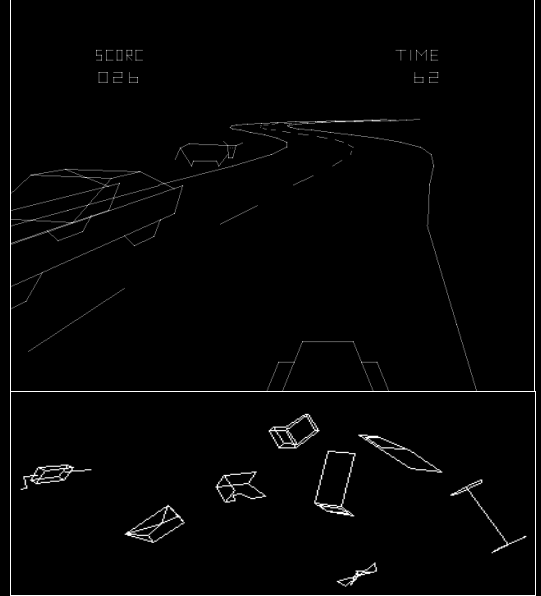
029

TIME
57



Late 1978, maybe early 1979 saw Speed Freak released from Vectorbeam (California)—the first, first-person racer with other vehicles heading towards you. Also the first Racing game to use 3D vector graphics, as would be used by a few other notable games in the subsequent years (Battlezone, Star Wars etc). Unlike later games, the processor was of course unable to implement any kind of hidden line removal algorithm (such as that invented by Arthur Appel at IBM in the sixties).

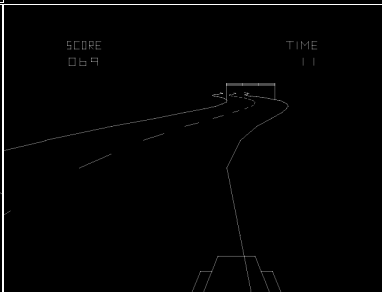
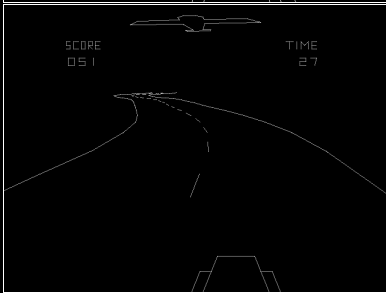
So whilst in retrospect it seems to have been heading for glory, in fact that just wasn't the case. The game was engineered by Larry Rosenthal, using 'stock' vector hardware he had created some years earlier at Cinematronics. But therein lay some of the problem...the game was created by a hardware genius, but game design requirements such as fun, addictiveness and playability are hard to see. Plus the cabinet was fairly basic and the hardware said to be unreliable. These factors plus more (expensive hardware? Small company with poor distribution?) means that like me, you've almost certainly never played this game because only 700 units were built. Unless of course you went to the 2003 classic arcade games show 'California Extreme' in San Jose, California. In contrast, Pac Man would go on to manufacture over 100,000 units).



The player moved through four gears as the game sped up and by the time you hit fourth gear, the speed increased exponentially—thus creating a very difficult game. Super-sensitive steering did not help matters.



Up until 1977, racers had been vertical scrolling games, sprint games or night driver clones. Despite being so technically advanced, Speed Freak was a disastrous failure commercially speaking and did nothing to encourage the genre.



NEW

Speed Freak

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26 1/2 Deep
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