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The Vectrex:

It's one of the coolest pieces of technology I have ever seen, but it's also incredibly odd. It looks like an old computer monitor in 'portrait mode', with a controller coming out of the bottom. It's heavy, the screen has a distinct hum, and the graphics while surprisingly sharp, look like the workings of a first-year graphic design student that just installed Adobe Illustrator, and on top of all that, it has a fantastic name: The Vectrex

The Vectrex is a console from the early 1980s, which attempted to bring the look and feel of the pay-to-play arcades of the '70s and '80s to the home[1]. While the idea of gaming portability and the drive to bring technologies to-the-home is very commonplace now, at the time, it was quite new. Adding to the uniqueness of the console, Smith Engineering (the developer of the Vectrex) used a surplus of Vector-based CRT displays as the cornerstone for the hardware. Vector displays are very different than the Rastor Displays that make up nearly all of the screens we now have, because Vector Displays function using equations: The equations are then plotted on the screen as lines, leading to a screen with very high clarity and resolution but with a severe lack of curved lines. But that's all part of the charm because while the screen lacked in curves, the system made up for it with its amazing sound card, solid games, and forward-thinking controller[2].

While technically successful in its mission to be a portable arcade for the home, the Vectrex was one of the many victims[3] of the North American Video Game Recession of 1983 and along with 12 other consoles, Smith Engineering and the manufacturer/distributor GCE went out of business. However, before their economic demise, Smith Engineering made all of the Vectrex's IP public domain which turned out to be a saving grace in the eyes of history. Using that pubic IP, the Vectrex has a passionate community of programmers and hardware engineers that work to bring even more games and functionality to a system that may have otherwise faded into obscurity[4].

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[1] Ahl, "The Vectrex Arcade System."

[2] Pamela Clark, "The Vectrex Arcade System."

[3] Kleinfield, "Video Games Industry Comes Down To Earth."

[4] Vectrex Museum, "Vectrex System History The Mini Arcade."

Sources

Ahl, David H. 1983. "THE VECTREX ARCADE SYSTEM." *CREATIVE COMPUTING VIDEO & ARCADE GAME*, 1983.

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