

Gridrunner™

by Jeff Minter

Scenario

In the year 2190, the human race has set up a huge solar-power collecting power station in Earth orbit to beam power down to earth. Because of its lattice-like shape, this power station is known simply as "The Grid". Shortly after beginning operation, the grid was found to be delivering less power than predicted. Investigation teams were sent into orbit. They discovered that the grid had been invaded by alien Droids, who were using its power to reproduce themselves, massing for an invasion of Earth. To combat the Droids, a special combat ship was developed. Small and incredibly maneuverable, the ship drew its power from the grid and, with such vast amounts of energy readily available, was able to carry an awesomely powerful plasma cannon.

This ship, known as the Gridrunner, was so fast and powerful that, with skillful control, it could annihilate vast amounts of hostile Droids.

The Droids have 3 main weapons: Gridsearch Squads, Pods, and X/Y Zappers.

Gridsearch Squads

These are linked Droid segments which traverse the grid horizontally, descending whenever they encounter an obstruction. Each squad has a rotating 'Leader Droid'. If the leader is hit, the Droid segment behind him takes over. If the squad is hit in the body, it splits into two independent squads.

Squads come in any size, from solitary Leader Droids to linked squads of many Droids.

Whenever a squad Droid is hit, his body turns into a Pod. Squad Droids are vulnerable to their own X/Y Zapper, and may be hit or split by them.

Pods

These small yellow devices lodge at the nodes of the grid, periodically growing in size and changing shape. When they reach the end of their life cycle they hurl a single bolt of unstoppable, lethal energy down the grid.

Hitting a Pod regresses it one stage in its life cycle. Repeated hits will eventually destroy the Pods.

X/Y Zappers

These two ships run along the boundaries of the grid. Periodically they stop, and the Y-Zapper emits a plasma beam. The X-Zapper fires a plasma pulse along the grid, and where the two meet, a new Pod forms.

It is not wise to get caught in the plasma beam from the Y-Zapper. The longer it is on, the more are your chances of losing the ship. The X-Zapper's pulse is generally harmless.

Starting Gridrunner™

Be sure the VIC 20 is turned off. Plug in the Gridrunner™ cartridge into the expansion port and turn on the power. The game will start automatically.

You may freeze the action by pressing the 'P' key (the screen will go white), and then press 'P' again to restart.