

## Ghetto Tech #1: "Scanimate"

Written by Tim Wray  
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In the spirit of my seemingly endless for-no-good-reason pursuit of the technology that preceded and built what we have today, I have decided to cover, in short articles, the more odd and unusual technologies that I run across. Stuff that people my age will likely not remember, as it generally predates their birth. So, look at it as a history lesson. We don't get the toys we have today without the invention of everything that came before. Enjoy.....ghetto tech!

### Scanimate

Back in 1999 or 2000, I ran across a website dedicated to what were said to be the 4 existing Scanimate animation machines. Always curious about generally anything that is powered by electricity that I hadn't seen before, I read about it. I also watched some crazy animations. Freaky looking stuff. Seriously, freaky, epileptic-seizure inducing video animation, with a custom-built analog computer. Only 8 of them were ever produced, and today, only one is known to be in working condition (or even surviving.)

They were used in animation from the late 1960s until the mid-1980s.

[Check out Dave Seig's page about Scanimate here.](#)

Here, for your enjoyment, are some youtube clips that involve scanimate animation!

#1: The original "Electric Company" Intro, a CTW (Think "Sesame Street") show produced from 1970 to ~1977 and aired on PBS in it's infancy

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#2: 1977 Letter "H" segment from Sesame Street (Pretty freaky, too...)

#3, Creepy 1974 Scanimate TV Station IDs

#4, WJKW-TV (WJW) 8, Cleveland, OH Late Nite Movie intro. Not sure this is scanimate, but it has the look. If anything, it's worth a watch to see the funky chroma-key effect (ie, "green screen", even though this one is blue.) They key a machine to replace all the blue on screen with the movie graphics. It wasn't perfect, watch the guy's collar on his shirt as the camera shot zooms toward the graphics. This is the same technique used for many years (and probably still now) to put the graphics behind weather forecasters while they do the weather on the local news. 1976.

Stay tuned for the next Ghetto Tech article!