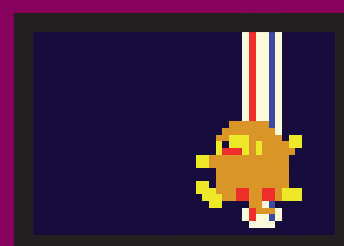
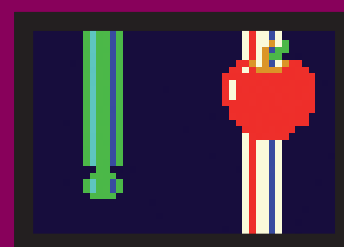
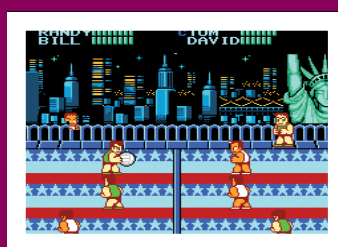
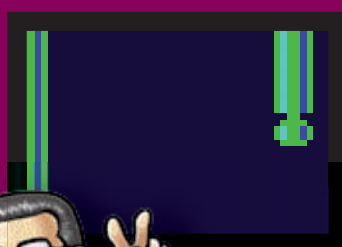
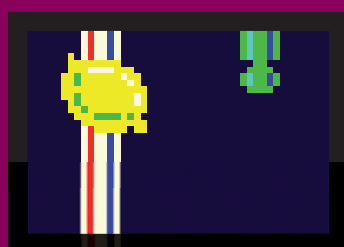
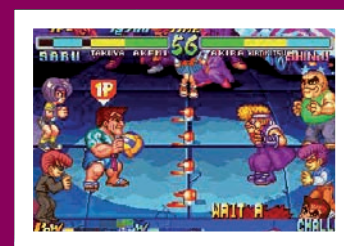
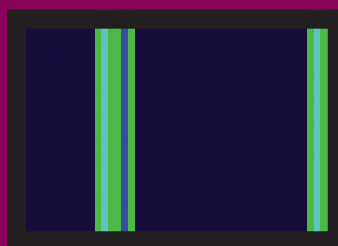
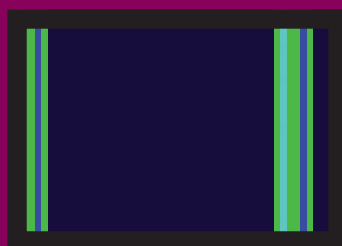
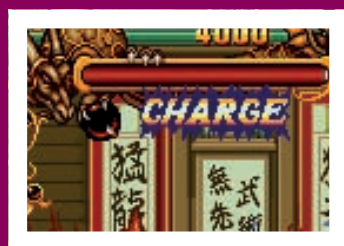


TECHNOS



# HOW BILLY LEE AND KUNIO KICKED SOME SERIOUS ASS AND BECAME US "RENEGADES"...





# TECHNOS

Billy Lee and Kunio. Two videogame characters with one thing in common: they both revolutionised the fighting and action genres. Creator, Technos Japan was not only responsible for the creation of the *Double Dragon* series, but also Kunio-kun, a tiny fighter who punched his way onto home consoles. John Anderson looks back at the history of the company, its subsidiary, American Technos, and examines a great game maker that had once fallen, but found a way to pick itself up and continue in today's competitive gaming market.

**J**apan 1981. Two men, Kunio Taki and Takashi Hanya left their respected jobs at Data East, and along with Takeo Hagiwara, formed a new videogame company – Technos Japan. Legend has it that the company initially began life as a small single-room apartment, while another source states that it had a small office and ten engineers. Whichever was true, great things came from this small start-up.

1982 would mark the first Technos Japan release of a videogame into domestic game centres (ironically, one that was built with Data East hardware). Called *Minky Monkey*, it was produced in association with Roller Tron and saw the player taking control of an on-screen simian. The concept was simple, climb up and down vines, grab fruits and avoid the game's many snakes and rival primates.

The next three years proved fruitful for the company and saw a total of nine more releases, many of which would be exported to game arcades abroad through strategic licensing partnerships. Interestingly, one such distribution deal was with Data East, which resulted in *Big Pro Wrestling* (or *Tag Team Wrestling* as it was known in the West) being released in many US arcades. The partnerships continued and a licensing deal was entered into with Taito America in 1985 with yet another wrestling game (many employees were huge wrestling fans) entitled *Exciting Hour* (or *Mat Mania* as it was known outside Japan). This game was exclusively distributed by Memetron Incorporated – it also went on to jointly distribute *Xaind Sleena* (*Solar Warrior* in the West) with Taito America. Interestingly, *Solar Warrior* was Techno's first and only scrolling shooter.

It was 1986 however that would prove to be a major year, one that would take the company in a whole new direction with a franchise that would become a major hit in Japan and gain cult status the world over. In other territories, he would

be known by an alternative name to make him seem less foreign, but in Japan he would only be known as Kunio-kun (kun is the Japanese prefix for a Japanese male student or colleague). This character (named after the company's president Kunio Taki) would make his debut in the game *Nekketsu Kōha Kunio-kun*, known to gamers outside of Japan as *Renegade*. Game designer Mitsuhiro Yoshida created the story, and was assisted by Hiroyuki Sekimoto and Yoshihisa Kishimoto (who would only be involved in the first game). This would be the first in the series of many *Nekketsu Kōha: Kunio-Kun* games. (*Nekketsu* is Japanese for "hot-blooded").

The *Nekketsu Kōha Kunio-kun* plotline would be drastically changed for its release outside of Japan. Gone was Kunio defending his brother from local bullies; instead we saw several character redesigns and a 'Mr K' rescuing his girlfriend from city thugs. *Renegade* was released in US arcades in 1986, with various 8-bit computer versions appearing a year later. An NES version followed in 1988 and it was one of the first titles on Nintendo's 8-bit console to feature 'anime' styled character designs. The character designers had stylised the Kunio-kun series of characters in a chibi (Japanese for little) style format, which was humorous to the Japanese, but would turn out to confuse people from other regions.

As its videogame catalogue increased,



» Screenshot from Technos Japan's first game: *Minky Monkey*

Technos Japan decided it was time to open a US office so that it could directly handle the licensing and distribution of its own games. Company President, Kunio Taki contacted Keiichi Iwamoto, who had previously provided vital arcade parts to Data East in Japan, where Taki had worked. Iwamoto later established the California offices of Data East USA. American Technos Incorporated was founded in 1987 to help push the arcade titles in North America. Iwamoto was given the title of President, but the executives needed the expertise of someone who had experience working in arcade sales. Enter Greg Rice, a regional sales manager at Atari Games Corporation's Milpitas, California office



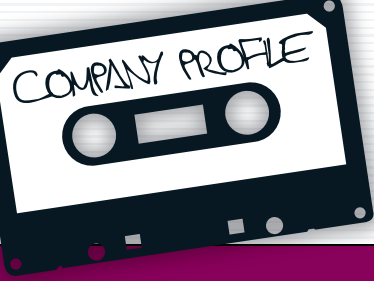
## IN THE KNOW

**In brief:** Formed in 1981, Technos Japan is best-known for its *Double Dragon* and Kunio-kun franchises. Despite branching out overseas, Technos Japan ran into several problems and eventually closed in 1997, with American Technos soon following in 1999. Luckily, Milllion Corporation acquired the rights to Technos Japan's games and now release Game Boy Advance titles of old classics via Atlus. Technos Japan may be dead, but its games live on.



» *Nekketsu Kōha Kunio-kun* is featured on the left. Notice the change in Taito America's altered arcade version called *Renegade* (right).





# TECHNOS

## THE ATLUS/ MILLION CONNECTION

Atlus Japan became interested in producing updated GBA versions of Technos' properties. They approached Million Corporation and soon struck a publishing deal that would bring out *Super Dodge Ball Advance*, *Double Dragon Advance* and *River City Ransom EX* to the GBA in Japan, while Atlus USA worked on the English localisation and released the games in North America.

These updated GBA versions have yet to be released in the UK, however Sonoko Saito, product manager of Atlus USA welcomes a UK publisher cautioning, "Only if the potential publisher will take these games as they are. It would be very difficult to have the titles localised or modified in any way at this point as the development resources may not be available." Let's hope a UK publisher takes notice of these great GBA titles for a future acquisition.

Atlus Japan is currently releasing a series of Technos' Famicom classics titled "Kunio-Kun Nekketsu Collection" for the GBA. The first of three includes *Nekketsu Koukou Dodgeball* and *Nekketsu Street Basket* – *Ganbare Dunk Heroes*.



» *Kunio-Kun Nekketsu Collection Volume 1* from Atlus Japan. This is one of three volumes with classic 8-bit NES *Kunio* games.

who eventually joined the company in late 1988.

The arrival of the US arm also saw the creation of what would become Technos' most popular franchise: *Double Dragon*. The series would generate several sequels, followed by an extensive merchandising line. Taito America handled arcade distribution outside Japan, while American Technos took over arcade distribution on *Double Dragon's* sequels. However, Tradewest, a Texas-based start-up videogame publisher won the licence for several NES ports of the *Double Dragon* series, and control of subsequent merchandising rights. Acclaim would handle only a couple of NES ports in the series. This would be a deal that seemed suitable at the time, but afterwards (and regrettably) would take away a large percentage of the profits.

Meanwhile, Nintendo's Famicom system had taken off in Japan, and so had its US counterpart, the Nintendo Entertainment System or NES as it was more affectionately known. With its office already overcrowded due to the many arcade games it was working on, Technos opened a second office in Niigata so that it could focus on its *Kunio* series. Whilst this was happening, Greg Rice was becoming accustomed to Japanese business etiquette.

"My first trip to the Japan offices was in November 1988, just in time for the company party," he fondly recalls. "My fiancée and I sat at the head table with the owner and Mr Iwamoto and we were joined by 200 other members of staff. I just remember them forcing me up on stage

to sing karaoke and participate in various beer-drinking games. My fiancée at the time and I brought some bottles of tequila with us, and we were going to share the custom of drinking straight shots of tequila, but couldn't find any lemons or salt, so we ended up using a little bit of soy sauce. Kishimoto was one of these guys who instead of taking straight shots of tequila, simply filled a beer glass half-full with tequila – he obviously wanted to show the 'big American' that they could drink."

Apart from unusual drinking habits, Rice also witnessed the devotion and hard work of the staff. When deadlines had to be met on games the staff would simply sleep overnight in the offices to ensure that everything was on time.

"I was fairly new to the industry at the time, but what stuck with me was the office environment of some of these developers," recalls Rice. "It's just these guys programming the hell out of a game and smoked a hell of lot of cigarettes and drank a hell of a lot of coffee, and it's all they're focused on."

With the success of *Double Dragon*, the US arm realised it needed to handle arcade and home console publishing directly. With the Japanese branch wanting to aim a new licensed product at the arcade market, staff convinced Kunio Taki to acquire a license from the WWF (World Wrestling Federation). The end result was *WWF Superstars* in 1989, with a second title, *WWF Wrestlefest* appearing in 1991. The company went through the process of outlining the wrestlers' moves, introductions and biographies, while WWF

assisted and offered official approval every step of the way.

*WWF Wrestlefest* went on to become American Technos' best arcade seller. Rice was delighted to see *WWF Wrestlefest* on test and watching hordes of kids line up to play it. He also witnessed the arcade operator being forced to empty the coin box more than once (a sure sign of an arcade success). Meanwhile, the game was exhibited at arcade operator trade shows, and the staff were ecstatic to mingle with guest wrestlers such as Jake The Snake and Honky Tonkman. Sadly, Acclaim already owned the WWF licence for home video consoles, so the WWF franchise had to be kept in the arcades.

Although it was finding success in this area, American Technos wanted to break into the lucrative NES market. Its first US NES title would be *River City Ransom* (or *Downtown Nekketsu Monogatari* as it was known in Japan). *River City Ransom* was imported to the UK by Infogrames and was renamed *Street Gangs*; this one single title went on to become a cult classic with gamers the world over. *River City Ransom* once again featured the famous Kunio (renamed Alex for the localised English versions). Alex teamed up to help rescue his friend's girlfriend from gang leader Slick, and must fight thugs and bullies along the way. The game introduced a foreign audience to an array of anime/manga style characters and backgrounds unlike anything they'd seen before. Slight RPG elements were added that allowed Alex to collect coins from defeated foes and use them at the local shopping malls

## A TRIBUTE TO TECHNOS JAPAN & AMERICAN TECHNOS STAFF

The following people were employed at Technos Japan throughout the years and played a major part in game production.

Although every name is not listed here, (and we apologise to those whose names have been omitted), this list pays tribute to all their hard work. Thank you Technos Japan and American Technos for great gaming memories.

**Kunio Taki**  
**Takeo Hagiwara**  
**Takashi Hanya**  
**Akiko Yamane &**  
**Kumiko Mukai**  
**Noriyuki Tomiyama**

President & Founder – Technos Japan Inc  
Co-Founder/Senior Managing Director – Technos Japan Inc  
Co-Founder/Managing Director – Technos Japan Inc

**Kazunaka Yamane**

(PR Department – Game Manual & Box Art Design)  
General Manager – Technos Japan Inc  
Minky Monkey (Director & Programmer)  
Renegade (Programmer)  
Super Dodge Ball (Production Support)  
The Combatribes (Arcade/SNES Version Director)

**Michiya Hirasawa**

Double Dragon (Arcade Director & Producer)  
Renegade (Director)  
The Combatribes (SNES Director)  
Super Dodge Ball (Director)  
River City Ransom (Director)  
Nintendo World Cup (Game Design)  
Double Dragon Advanced (GBA Producer for Million Corp)

**Naritaka Nishimura**

**Hiroyuki Sekimoto**

River City Ransom (Director)  
Nintendo World Cup (Designer)  
Double Dragon II: The Revenge (NES Director)  
Double Dragon (Arcade Director & Designer)  
WWF Wrestlefest (Director)

**Masao Shiroto**

**Shinichi Saito**

Double Dragon (Game Boy Director & Background Designer)  
The Combatribes (Arcade Background Design)  
Shadow Force (Background Design)  
River City Ransom (Special Thanks)  
Renegade (NES Music Designer)  
Super Dodge Ball (NES Music Designer)  
River City Ransom (NES Music Designer)

**Misa Yazaki**

**Shintaro Kumagai**

Nintendo World Cup (NES Music Designer)  
River City Ransom (Special Thanks)  
Double Dragon (Game Boy Audio Composer)  
The Combatribes (Arcade & SNES Music)  
Shadow Force (Music Composer)  
Double Dragon (Music Composer)  
Double Dragon II: The Revenge (SNES Music Composer)  
Super Double Dragon (SNES Music Composer)  
Super Dodge Ball (Sound Effects)  
River City Ransom (Sound Effects)  
The Combatribes (Arcade Sound Effects & Software Design)  
Shadowforce (Sound Programmer)  
Nintendo World Cup (Sound Programmer)  
Double Dragon II (Sound Programmer)  
Acrobatic Dog Fight  
Super Dodge Ball (Programmer)  
WWF Wrestlefest (Programmer)  
The Combatribes (Arcade Software)  
Shadowforce (Advisor)  
Super Double Dragon (Programmer)  
Renegade (Designer)  
Super Dodge Ball (Manual Illustrator)  
River City Ransom (Character Designer)  
Double Dragon (Arcade Art Staff) (Game Boy Character Designer)  
River City Ransom (Background Designer)  
Renegade (Designer)  
Renegade (Programmer)  
River City Ransom (Programmer)



Technos Japan's WWF Wrestlefest and the WWF Wrestlefest Arcade Unit from American Technos

to re-energise. You could also purchase books that contained new fighting skills. It proved to be a unique concept that was hard to sell.

"Ultimately we realised that players liked the game," says Rice. "However, we did have some resistance to our rep system and retailers: 'who are these little characters and what do they do?' They were just so foreign looking," he continues. Despite initial reservations, *River City Ransom* went on to sell a respectable 250,000 units, a fair amount, but Rice felt it could have been higher...

"I think if the market had matured to where Japanimation was more in vogue at the time, *River City Ransom* would have definitely been accepted," he states.

Around the same time period that *River City Ransom* was released, other NES third parties and Nintendo of America itself had licensed various sports titles that featured the Kunio-kun characters. CSG Imagesoft, a small Sony game soft subsidiary, had licensed *Super Dodge Ball* (*Nekketsu Koukou Dodge Ball* in Japan) from Technos for a June 1989 release. Nintendo of America needed titles to fill its sports line-up and released *Super Spike V'ball* in February of 1990, and *Nintendo World Cup* (*Nekketsu Koukou Dodge ball By-Soccer Hen*) in December of that same year, while a Game Boy version of *Nintendo World*

*Cup* followed in June 1991. On all of these releases American Technos assisted each company with localisation and made changes for its English-language versions in association with its Tokyo home office.

During this period Tradewest and Acclaim were raking in serious profits on its *Double Dragon* NES games that Technos had licensed to them. Tradewest in particular made an enormous amount of money since it maintained a share of *Double Dragon*'s merchandising rights, which included comic books, a TV cartoon series and even a motion picture.

American Technos at its peak had up to 13 employees at its Cupertino offices, and many projects were in the planning stages. Nintendo introduced its 16-bit Super Nintendo Entertainment System to Japan and North American in November 1990 and August 1991 respectively. Times were changing, yet Technos Japan kept on making games based on the *Kunio-kun* franchise for the 8-bit NES.

The American firm needed 16-bit SNES games to keep up with the increasingly competitive marketplace. Game developer Athena, approached Technos Japan seeking help to find an American publisher for its SNES bowling title, and at the time, the American subsidiary needed to fill a gap in their product flow. *Super Bowling* was launched for the North

## COMPANY PROFILE: TECHNOS

"IT'S JUST THESE GUYS PROGRAMMING THE HELL OUT OF A GAME AND SMOKING A HELL OF A LOT OF CIGARETTES AND DRINKING A HELL A LOT OF A LOT OF COFFEE, AND IT'S ALL THEY'RE FOCUSED ON"

GREG RICE

American market in September of 1992. It surprisingly became the company's most profitable seller ever (apart from *Double Dragon*) at the lofty price point of \$59.95.

Back at Technos Japan a unique NES sports title called *Bikkuri Nekketsu Shin Kiroku* had been developed and its American counterpart decided to have another go with this Kunio title, despite *River City Ransom*'s low sales numbers and the changing marketplace. The game was retitled *Crash 'N The Boys Street Challenge*, and the character names and the storyline were once again altered.

*Crash 'N The Boys Street Challenge* featured a number of multi-event sports games that up to four-players could compete in. Among them were 400 metre high hurdles, hammer golf, water slaughter, and skyline scramble. Players could even increase their team's strength, skill and agility by purchasing items in sports shops with the medals they'd previously won.

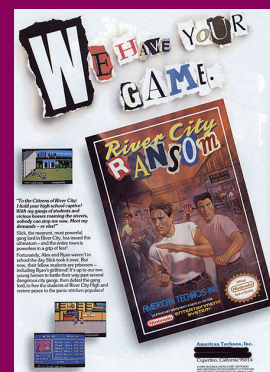
American Technos was aiming to create a whole series of NES games developed by its parent company under the *Crash 'N The Boys* franchise name. An ice hockey and soccer game were planned to follow *Street Challenge* and announcements were made to videogame magazines. *Crash 'N the Boys Ice Challenge* and *Crash 'N the Boys Soccer Challenge* were already in the planning stages and were being localised for North American audiences.

*Crash 'N The Boys Street Challenge* was released in October 1992 and failed to meet expected sales numbers. *Ice Challenge* and *Soccer Challenge* were subsequently cancelled, the *Street Challenge* franchise as a whole was scrapped, Kunio-kun would never make another appearance on North American NES consoles again.

"It was at a time when the transition was going from 8-bit to 16-bit. It got to the point where it did not make sense for us to do it, to try and milk the 8-bit market when we weren't assured that these characters were going to be accepted."



Technos Japan flyer advertising the arcade version of *Nekketsu Kouha Kunio-kun* which would later become known as *Renegade* outside Japan

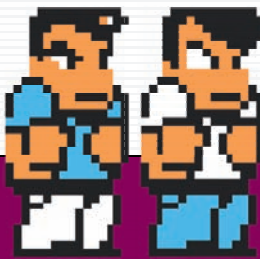


An original American Technos magazine advertisement for *River City Ransom*, notice the altered non-anime style box art.

Genei Fukuhari	Super Dodge Ball (Programmer)
	Nintendo World Cup (Programmer)
	Double Dragon II (NES Version Programmer)
	River City Ransom (Programmer)
	Super Dodge Ball (Programmer)
	River City Ransom (Programmer)
	WWF Wrestlefest (Programmer)
Kouji Ogata	Shadowforce (System Engineer)
	Double Dragon II: The Revenge (Programmer)
	Super Dodge Ball (Character Designer)
	Voltage Fighter Gowcaizer (Graphic Artwork Crew)
	Super Double Dragon (SNES Main Programmer, Fight Choreographer & Object Designer)
	Double Dragon (Arcade animator)
	Double Dragon II: The Revenge (NES Character Designer)
Masamichi Katagiri	Double Dragon (NEO-GEO CD Graphics Designer)
	Super Dodge Ball (NEO-GEO CD Graphic Assistant)
	WWF Wrestlefest (Character Design Assistant)
	The Combatribes (Character Designer)
	Shadow Force (Object Designer)
	Nintendo World Cup (Background Design)
	The Combatribes (Background Design)
Muneki Ebinuma	Voltage Fighter Gowcaizer (Graphic Artwork Crew)
	Super Dodge Ball (NEO-GEO CD Graphic Assistants)
	Super Double Dragon (SNES Planner & Fight Choreography)
	Double Dragon (NEO-GEO CD Planner)
	Double Dragon (GBA Planner)
	Shadow Force (Fight Choreography)
	President - American Technos Inc.
Keiichi Iwamoto	Senior Vice President - American Technos Inc.
Gregory S. Rice	



# TECHNOS



GAMES REVIEWS



## RENEGADE

NES, TAITO AMERICA

» Originally released as *Nekketsu Kōha Kunio-kun* in Japanese arcades, (and the first Kunio-kun game in the series), the North American port has Mr K (C'mon, we know it's really Kunio!), bashing up the bad guys in an array of stages. The Taito version changes all the Japanese style character designs and says goodbye to the Japanese school uniforms to give this game a more American look. This NES port is good, but needs some improvement. **7/10**



## SUPER DODGEBALL

NES, CSG IMAGESOFT

» Originally released as *Nekketsu Koukou Dodgeball* in Japanese arcades. Personally speaking, this is a game that gets old fast because of its image flicker and slowdown glitches on the NES. Featuring all your favourite Kunio characters and some *River City Ransom*-like environments and music, you can compete in single world cup, versus or Bean Ball mode (which is the best and results in some hilarious moments). **6.5/10**



## RIVER CITY RANSOM

NES, AMERICAN TECHNOS

» Originally released as *Downtown Nekketsu Monogatari* on the Japanese Famicom and *Street Gangs* in the UK by Infogrames. This is the one title that must be played second to its *Double Dragon* franchise. Kunio is renamed Alex in the English port and must help his friend Ryan rescue his girlfriend from the infamous Slick and his barrage of schoolyard bullies. Along the way, Kunio grabs some serious coin from his defeated foes. **10/10**



## SUPER DOUBLE DRAGON

SNES, TRADEWEST

» Many fans argue that this is one of the best *Double Dragon* games of the series for home consoles, and I have to agree. However, for its 16-bit upgrade it's surprisingly thin on storyline (Guess what? You're rescuing Marian again!), but thick with a vast array of fighting moves and weapons. It's also packed with a great score courtesy of Kazunaka Yamane. The original Japanese version titled *Return of Double Dragon* is worth checking out. **9/10**



## THE COMBATRIBES

SNES, AMERICAN TECHNOS

» This game is one of the final action fighters designed for the SNES by Technos in the same fashion as *Super Double Dragon*. The Combatribes are an elite group of cyborg heroes known as Berzerker, Blitz and Bullova who must enter New York City to find gang leader Martha Splatterhead. Splatterhead was once part of the Combatribes group before she lost her mind. Is definitely a game to check out on the Nintendo Super NES. **8/10**



## NINTENDO WORLD CUP

NES, NINTENDO

» Originally released as *Nekketsu Koukou Dodgeball Bu-Soccer Hen* in Japan, this was one of the more enjoyable NES soccer games out there featuring the Kunio characters with 13 selectable teams. Players can plan defensive/offensive strategies, and signal their fellow CPU teammates to shoot or pass. This was Nintendo's premiere sports title that could use the Nintendo's NES four-player adapter accessory. **9/10**

"IF AMERICAN TECHNOS WOULD HAVE BEEN SHIPPING THAT PRODUCT THEN I WOULDN'T BE HERE TALKING TO YOU TODAY, AMERICAN TECHNOS WOULD HAVE LIKELY RE-INVESTED THAT MONEY AND POTENTIALLY BE A MAJOR PUBLISHER TODAY"

GREG RICE

Technos did have a 16-bit side-scrolling fighter up its sleeve, and its name was *The Combatribes*. An arcade version was released in both Japan and the United States, while the Japanese staff developed a 12-meg cartridge version for the SNES that was released in March 1993.

*The Combatribes* featured a completely new storyline, but it had a resemblance to the side-scrolling fighting style of *Double Dragon*. Gamers would control cyborg fighters through the streets of New York city on a government mission to try and locate Martha Splatterhead, a gang leader cyborg who had lost her mind. With its mediocre story came mediocre sales, and the game would be the final Nintendo title published by American Technos.

Back at Technos Japan, management and game designers had placed Kunio in possibly every NES/SNES sports style game it could try between 1991 and 1994 – from baseball, basketball, ice hockey, to dodge ball. Ports of Kunio games were also made to other systems such as the PC Engine, Sharp X68000 and Mega Drive.

SNES sequels to previous Kunio side-scrolling fighters were produced and released in Japan, one of them Shodai *Nekketsu Kouha Kunio-kun*, which just happened to be a sequel to *Renegade*. None of these games made it outside Japan because the North American domestic market had changed drastically; game storylines would have to be changed once again and in the end the Kunio line of characters would not be fully welcomed as they had been by faithful Japanese gamers.

Technos Japan hoped that another licence would be a key to profits. The company went forward and acquired the licence to Popeye from King Features Syndicate and released a Popeye volleyball game for Sega's Game Gear and another *Popeye* title for the Super Famicom in 1994. American releases of these Popeye titles were planned but later cancelled. In that same year two titles

were released for the Super Famicom: *Sugoro Quest*, an RPG, and a puzzler titled *Kunio No Oden*.

It's unclear when and how the cash flow problems for the Japanese firm began, but a serious change was needed from the SNES market, which had ballooned to include countless software developers trying to compete for a piece of the 16-bit pie. Other developers and publishers came to the marketplace, tried to compete, tried to get their product on store shelves, but many went bankrupt.

"Most outsiders looking in at the videogame business at that time viewed it as 'Man, if you have a game you can make a lot of money'. Well, there is a lot that goes into making that money. For every ten bad ones you might get a good one. We just went through a period where we didn't have the good ones," Rice explains.

Technos Japan was looking for a new hardware edge, and it placed its hopes with SNK and established a close business relationship with the company that had brought its Neo-Geo system to the hardware market. Cartridge versions of *Double Dragon* and *Voltage Fighter Gowcaizer* came out for the Neo-Geo in 1995, followed by versions ported for the Neo-Geo CD system the following year in Japan. A Super Famicom RPG titled *DunQuest* also came out the same year; this would be the final Nintendo title that was branded with the Technos name.

A gap in product flow once again needed to be filled. The licence to *Blockout* had been maintained and the puzzler was renamed *Geom Cube*: it was released for the Sony PlayStation in time for the winter 1995 holiday season in North America and then in Japan in limited quantities in 1996.

That following year marked the end for Technos as a developer and publisher. The Japanese branch thought that a Kunio style dodge ball game for the Neo-Geo would help cash flow. Development staff assembled to work on the game, and it became the company's final release



in 1996. Cash problems mounted and Technos Japan officially filed for bankruptcy that year.

In 1997 a small Japanese publisher known as Urban Plant ported the Neo-Geo version of *Double Dragon* to the PlayStation. American Technos submitted the game to SCEA for approval so that it could be given a North American release, but approval was denied citing that the title did not show off the PlayStation's full hardware capabilities. Greg Rice expresses his frustration.

“This was unfortunate because we probably could have sold a good number of those had Sony approved the product just by virtue of all the *Double Dragon* fans out there that owned a PlayStation. Sony had tightened up on the approval process, and they did not feel that this game showed off the hardware system. It was hard to argue with them, but you could probably make the case that there were other products that were inferior to it.”

These events did not help the parent company. Sadly Technos Japan closed its doors in 1997. Meanwhile, a Taiwanese investor with no game industry experience began investing in American Technos. The investor expected quick financial returns from the publisher and did not understand that these returns would sometimes come after an 18-24 month development period typically required for a single piece of game software.

A partnership was established with UK's Elite Systems, which had a game called *Strike Point* in development for the Sony PlayStation. When the game finally came out it was a poor seller in the North American market. Elite had a soccer game in development soon afterwards but American Technos passed on publishing it.

During the next two years the US company hung on while many other software and screen-saver projects were put into development. Company president Keiichi Iwamoto left in 1998. Greg Rice had daily telephone meetings with the Taiwanese investor group until they finally agreed that a six-month timeframe be established to officially close the business.

“I just realised that the new owners really were not going to get it, as far as what was required to really make a company out of this financially and time-wise.”

At the end of 1999 American Technos

was no more. In retrospect, one particular licensing deal that was made dealt a major blow in the mind of Greg Rice.

“The opportunity that was lost started with *Double Dragon* when it was licensed to Tradewest. That's where the lost opportunity was, because millions and millions of dollars were made during that time. It was nothing for American Technos to receive a royalty check from Tradewest of \$500,000 or \$750,000 for units shipped. If American Technos had been shipping that product then I wouldn't be here talking to you today, American Technos would have likely re-invested that money and potentially be a major publisher today. Technos Japan wanted the guarantee that Tradewest was willing to offer, which allowed Technos Japan to push the Kunio-kun series in Japan and become more successful over there.”

Greg Rice and Keiichi Iwamoto officially departed from a videogame business they felt had become too competitive and cutthroat. They still remain close business partners through an audio technology development group based in California.

Technos had a great run despite its bad luck and harsh competitive environment it faced as the videogames industry became larger. Its history, like so many other game developers and publishers is not uncommon, but it's one that also serves as a lesson for future industry players.

The company revolutionised the way gamers played side-scrolling action games; it was ahead of its time for. Technos presented its games in a unique anime/manga style that was playable, but most importantly was also enjoyable at the same time and never became old or boring. Its continuation on today's game consoles is a testament to that.

Japanese game properties from the past and their corresponding game source codes have sat on the shelf and collected dust, some are forgotten, while some are even lost and tragically discarded. Former Technos Japan staff that moved to the Million Corporation have made sure that this does not happen to the properties they worked long and hard to design. This is one strategy that has helped create new fans of *Double Dragon* and Kunio. Fans from the Eighties and Nineties can replay their favourites, and perhaps recall the time when magic came from Technos.

## COMPANY PROFILE: TECHNOS

Neo-Geo screenshot of *Double Dragon*

### OFFICIAL TECHNOS JAPAN GAME LIST

This list may not contain the names of Technos properties that were ported to other Japanese game systems. The following list of Technos Japan game titles were officially confirmed by officials at Million Corporation, its current copyright owner.

<b>1982</b> <b>Minky Monkey</b> (Arcade) (in association with Roller Tron Corp.)	<b>1992</b> <b>Nekketsu Koukou Dodgeball Bu - Soccer Hen</b> (PC Engine) (Licensed to NaxatSoft in Japan) <b>Nekketsu Koukou Dodgeball Bu - Soccer Hen</b> (Famicom) (In association with Pal Soft) <b>Nekketsu Koukou Dodgeball Bu - Soccer Hen</b> (Mega Drive) (In association with Pal Soft) <b>Bikkuri Nekketsu Shin Kiroku! - Harukanaru Kin Medal</b> (Famicom) <b>Nekketsu Kakutou Densetsu</b> (Famicom) <b>Shodai Nekketsu Kouha Kunio-Kun</b> (Super Famicom) <b>Super Double Dragon</b> (Super Famicom) <b>Downtown Nekketsu Koushinkyoku</b> (Game Boy) <b>Heat Beat</b> (Famicom) <b>Ike Ike! Nekketsu Hockey Bu Subette Koronde Dairantou</b> (Famicom)
<b>1983</b> <b>Dommy Scrambled Egg</b> (Arcade) <b>Big Pro Wrestling!</b> (Arcade)	<b>1993</b> <b>Bikkuri Nekketsu Shinkiroku! - Dokodemo Kin Medal</b> (Game Boy) <b>Shadow Force</b> (arcade) <b>Kunio-kun no nekketsu Soccer League</b> (Famicom) <b>Nekketsu! Street Basket - Ganbare Dunk Heroes</b> (Famicom) <b>Kunio-Kun no dodge Ball - Zenin Shuugou!</b> (Super Famicom) <b>Downtown Nekketsu Baseball Monogatari - Baseball de Shoufuda!</b> (Famicom) <b>Kunio-Kun</b> (Super Famicom) <b>Downtown Special: Kunio-Kun no Jidaigeki dayo Zenin Shuugou</b> (Game Boy)
<b>1984</b> <b>Buten Ohara's Suit Cha Lucky Dog-Fight</b> (Arcade) <b>Mysterious Stones - Dr. Kick In Adventure</b> (Arcade) <b>Karate Do - The Way of Karate Syusse Oozumou</b>	<b>1994</b> <b>Kunio no oden</b> (Super Famicom) <b>Popeye's Beach V'ball</b> (Japan) (Sega Game Gear) <b>Nekketsu! Beach Volley da yo: Kunio-kun</b> (Game Boy) <b>Shin Nekketsu Kouha - Kunio-tachi no banka</b> (Super Famicom) <b>Taiyou no Tenshi Maro: O Hanabatake wa Dai-Panic</b> (Game Boy) <b>Popeye Ijiwaru Majo: Sea Hag no Maki</b> (Super Famicom) <b>Hybrid Wrestler</b> (Super Famicom) <b>Sugoro Quest</b> (Super Famicom)
<b>1985</b> <b>Bogey Manor</b> (Arcade) <b>Exciting Hour</b> (Arcade)	<b>1995</b> <b>Double Dragon</b> (Neo Geo) <b>Voltage Fighter Gowcaizer</b> (Neo Geo) <b>DunQuest</b> (Super Famicom)
<b>1986</b> <b>Nekketsu Koha Kunio-Kun</b> (Arcade) <b>Xaind Sleena</b> (Arcade) <b>Battle Lane Volume 5!</b> (Arcade) <b>Mania Challenge or Vs Mania Challenge</b> (Arcade)	<b>1996</b> <b>Double Dragon</b> (Neo Geo CD) <b>Voltage Fighter Gowcaizer</b> (Neo Geo CD) <b>Geom Cube</b> (Sony PlayStation) <b>Super Dodge Ball</b> (Neo Geo)
<b>1987</b> <b>Nekketsu Kouha Kunio-Kun</b> (Famicom) <b>Nekketsu Koukou Dodgeball</b> (Arcade) <b>Double Dragon</b> (Arcade)	<b>1997</b> <b>Double Dragon</b> (Sony PlayStation) (Licensed to Urban Plant in Japan)
<b>1988</b> <b>Double Dragon II - The Revenge</b> (Arcade) <b>Sai Yu Gou Ma Roku</b> (Arcade) <b>U.S. Championship V'Ball</b> (Arcade) <b>Nekketsu Koukou Dodgeball</b> (Famicom)	
<b>1989</b> <b>Downtown Nekketsu Monogatari</b> (Famicom) <b>WWF Superstars</b> (Arcade) <b>Block Out</b> (Arcade)	
<b>1990</b> <b>Nekketsu Koukou Dodgeball Bu PC Bangai Hen</b> (PC Engine) (Licensed to Naxat Soft in Japan) <b>Double Dragon III - The Rosetta Stone</b> (Arcade) <b>The Combatribes</b> (Arcade) <b>Downtown Nekketsu Koushin Kyoku - Soreyuke Daiundoukai</b> (Famicom) <b>Nekketsu Koukou Dodgeball Bu - Soccer Hen</b> (Famicom) <b>Nekketsu Kouha Kunio- Kuhn - Bangai Rantou-Hen</b> (Game Boy)	
<b>1991</b> <b>WWF Wrestlefest</b> (Arcade) <b>Sugoro Quest: The Quest of Dice Heroes</b> (Famicom) <b>Downtown Special - Kunio- Kuhn no jidaigeki Dayo Zenin Shuugou!</b> (Famicom) <b>Nekketsu Koukou Dodge Ball Bu</b> (Japan) (Game Boy) <b>Nekketsu Koukou Soccer-Bu World Cup Hen</b> (Game Boy)	