

# Old picks up for new tricks

Here are five PC games that deserve a revival

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THE video games industry recently saw a few old game series being resurrected, and reactions have been mixed.

For example, *Box Office Bust*, the updated version of dating adventure game series *Leisure Suit Larry*, was released last year to universal condemnation after a five-year break. Role-playing game (RPG) *Fallout 3*, on the other hand, garnered critical acclaim when it was released in 2008 a decade after its predecessor.

With the recent news that the long dead *X-COM* series is going to be resuscitated, my hopes are raised that some of my favourite old game series might be just as lucky. Here are the top five PC games on my wish list.



## 1 Wing Commander

First released in 1990, this space combat simulation game has an engaging storyline of humans fighting a big feline-like alien called Kilrathi.

By its third iteration, the fantastic space dogfighting gameplay was interjected with full-motion video cutscenes featuring actors such as Mark Hamill (Luke Skywalker in *Star Wars*) and John Rhys-Davies (Gimli in *Lord of the Rings*).

Unfortunately, the last *Wing Commander* game, *Prophecy* (which was supposed to be the start of another trilogy), was released in 1997 with only an expansion the year after.

With declining interest in space combat, there has been no *Wing Commander* game since, except for a forgettable Xbox Live Arcade game in 2007.

It would be awesome to see Mark Hamill in action again.



## 2 MechWarrior

*MechWarrior* puts you in the cockpit of BattleMech (a giant robot) as you battle for honour or money. The game debuted in 1989, followed by *MechWarrior 2* and an expansion pack in 1995. In the 1996 stand-alone sequel to *MechWarrior 2*, *MechWarrior 2: Mercenaries* (my favourite), you take charge of a mercenary squad and pick missions for different factions.

Microsoft took over the franchise from Activision and released *MechWarrior 3* and *MechWarrior 4*. Unfortunately, after the last expansion in 2002, the franchise ground to a halt.

I miss piloting the giant robots over various terrains, arming them with enough heat sinks to prevent overheating while firing missiles and lasers to kill enemies.

The good news is that *MechWarrior 4* and its expansion packs will be made available free soon by MekTek. Nonetheless, I hope to see a *MechWarrior 5*.



## 3 System Shock

If you have played *BioShock*, you might want to know that it was inspired by a 1994 game called *System Shock*. In this first-person action RPG, you play a hacker who has to use your wits and weapons to save Earth from an evil artificial intelligence being bent on destroying it.

Its innovative gameplay earned raved reviews, but it was a commercial failure. A sequel was released in 1999, again winning numerous accolades. More than a decade has since passed and *System Shock 3* remains a big question mark.



## 4 Syndicate

*Syndicate* is an isometric real-time tactical game released in 1993, where you control four cyborg agents of your syndicate in a futuristic cyberpunk world.

You take on missions such as assassinating rival agents or executives, and persuading scientists to join your cause. Along the way, you have to research and develop

weapons and upgrades for your agents.

Apart from its great gameplay, the game endears itself to any science fiction fan for its resemblance to *Blade Runner*.

After the 1996 sequel, *Syndicate Wars*, there has been no word if another would be published. But there are reports that Starbreeze Studios might be working on a new *Syndicate* title. I can only hope it is true.



## 5 Crusader

In this third-person 2D isometric action shooter, you play a super-soldier who defected from the draconian world government, World Economic Consortium (WEC), to join the Resistance.

You play missions spread across different locations, from space stations to factories, as you strive to sabotage the evil works of WEC. Each mission has its own objectives, with traps and puzzles along the way. In between each successful mission, there are full-motion video cutscenes to further the engaging storyline.

After the first game, *Crusader: No Remorse*, was released in 1995, a sequel, *Crusader: No Regret*, was launched the following year. The franchise then went dead.

These days, with all things 3D, isometric shooters might not be appealing anymore. But I believe there is a market for it. Look how well *Fallout 3* was received despite turning 3D from its 2D isometric roots.

So, what are the old game franchises you hope to see revived?

## NINTENDO DS GAME REVIEW: POKEMON SOUL SILVER

### Definite winner

SEASONED players know the drill. You begin the game as a young trainer and pick a starter creature before setting off on your journey to the Pokemon League.



The Pokewalker adds a refreshing touch. Trevor Tan

The new *Pokemon Heart Gold* and *Soul Silver* are remakes of the *Gold* and *Silver* versions, first released in 1999. The only differences between *Gold* and *Silver* are the kinds of Pokemon you encounter in the game.

The objective is to defeat the most powerful trainers in the game, the Elite Four. Along the way, you fight wild Pokemon, capture some to expand your team and pit your pets against those from other trainers to level-up your monsters.

Apart from enhanced graphics that give the game environment a more 3D look, this revised edition also comes with a new accessory — the Pokewalker.

The Pokewalker is a simple pedometer that really adds to the gameplay. It reduces the most tedious aspect of the

game — training your Pokemon. It also gives you access to a wider range of Pokemon, which I found immensely helpful for building a diverse and powerful team right from the start.

The new accessory rewards you for walking by converting your steps into experience points (to strengthen your Pokemon) and Watts — currency for you to spend on the two micro-games, *Pokeradar* and *Dowsing Machine*.

*Pokeradar* lets you fight and capture wild Pokemon, while *Dowsing Machine* allows you to find hidden items. You can connect your Pokewalker to your DS via infrared to transfer one Pokemon to “walk” with you in the pedometer, as well as the items and monsters acquired during your “walk” to the game.

While the gameplay and storyline stick strictly to the longstanding norm of the series, the controls have changed since the previous *Pearl* and *Diamond* versions, making much better use of the touchscreen on the DS. Instead of making you hold down the B button to sprint, you can select an icon on the bottom screen to toggle the running feature. And instead of having to hit the X button to bring up the menu, each menu item is now displayed on the bottom screen for easy navigation.

**Verdict:** My only grouse with this remake is its same-old predictable storyline. The classic gameplay still works well and is greatly enhanced by the novelty of the Pokewalker. A must-have for Pokefans.

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