

## Readers' Letters

# WRITE ACCESS



## Converted

At last, the UK has a decent Linux magazine! Excellent, well done! I have found the first issue to be most informative and entertaining. The tutorials were very good I felt that I had actually learnt something and was not left hanging in the air unlike the "other" UK magazine which never seems to go into any detail.

I have been converted and will be subscribing shortly. All the best for the future and keep up the good work. **David Price**

*Thanks, David! We are pleased to have received many letters in this vein. But we are still striving to make the magazine even better! [Ed.]*

## User-unfriendly?

After reading issue 1 I feel compelled to give you my thoughts on Linux. Over the years I've used DOS 5, BeOS, Windows 3.1, 95 and 98 and have tried to use various flavours of Linux including versions from Corel, Red Hat, Slackware, Turbolinux (all quickly abandoned) and recently SuSE 6.4. The latter installed very quickly but took hours to get the display, sound and modem working correctly in spite of the relevant cards being "supported".

So I tried installing "Kruiser" from your cover CD. All seemed well until "configure" terminated with the error message "checking for X... configure: error: Can't find X includes. Please check your installation and add correct paths" What the hell does that mean? Then I tried being really brave and installing EPLwm. This resulted in a screenful of errors.

I decided to delete SuSE and install Mandrake, but I was wary. The installation screen has no "Exit Install" star, partially obscured buttons at the bottom of the screen and no scrollbars in the help section (unlike your illustration). Having come across this sort of sloppyness before during installation (I

forget which version of Linux) and being unable to proceed, my immediate reaction was to exit. How? Switch off of course!

As a matter of interest, Windows 98 SE was custom installed from scratch without a hitch on the same computer in about 40 minutes, plus another 10 minutes to set up and download e-mail and access the internet. All my experiences of trying to use Linux have convinced me that it's the most user-unfriendly operating system ever devised. No doubt I'll persevere once my frustration has abated, but at the moment the saying "Linux is an OS designed by a committee" comes to mind, with apologies to the camel. **John Hartley**

*The errors you saw trying to install kruiser and EPLwm were caused by missing header files. Many distributions don't automatically include all the c-headers necessary to compile graphical applications from source code. The problem and its solution is tackled in the article "Installation problems" in this issue. Locating and installing the libraries can be hard work, but you only have to do it once. Unfortunately the alternative – putting a ready-compiled binary version on the CD – would be even more unsatisfactory because the package may only work on the same processor type under a similar distribution to the one it was compiled on, leaving many readers disappointed.*

*As to your problems installing Linux, it sounds as if you have just been unlucky. Technically it is very difficult to write an installer that can cope with the near-infinite permutations of hardware that can be found in a PC. Microsoft has been able to spend a lot of time and even more money on the Windows setup program. Linux is improving all the time in this area but often you still need a bit of effort and determination to get everything working right.*

*But Linux is not designed by a committee. Every user who is so inclined can help with its development and influence its direction. So don't criticise – get involved! [Ed.]*

## Letters

*We welcome your letters either about the magazine or on topics of general Linux and open source interest. Letters will be edited if not brief and to the point. Send your letters to [letters@linuxmagazine.co.uk](mailto:letters@linuxmagazine.co.uk). Please include your full name.*