

**General Contacts**

General Enquiries 01625 855169  
 Fax 01625 855071  
[www.linux-magazine.co.uk](http://www.linux-magazine.co.uk)  
 Subscriptions [subs@linux-magazine.co.uk](mailto:subs@linux-magazine.co.uk)  
 E-mail Enquiries [edit@linux-magazine.co.uk](mailto:edit@linux-magazine.co.uk)  
 Letters [letters@linux-magazine.co.uk](mailto:letters@linux-magazine.co.uk)

**Editor**

John Southern  
[jsouthern@linux-magazine.co.uk](mailto:jsouthern@linux-magazine.co.uk)

**Staff Writers**

Keir Thomas, Dave Cusick,  
 Martyn Carroll

**Contributors**

Alison Davis, Andrew Halliwell,  
 Colin Murphy, Richard Smedley

**International Editors**

Harald Milz  
[hmilz@linux-magazin.de](mailto:hmilz@linux-magazin.de)  
 Hans-Georg Esser  
[hgesser@linux-user.de](mailto:hgesser@linux-user.de)  
 Bernhard Kuhn  
[bkuhn@linux-magazin.de](mailto:bkuhn@linux-magazin.de)

**International Contributors**

Klaus Bosau, Falko Brätigam,  
 Mirko Dölle, Friedrich  
 Dominicus, Michael Engel, Nils  
 Faerber, Thorsten Fischer, Björn  
 Ganslandt, Georg Greve,  
 Andreas Huchler, Patricia Jung,  
 Heike Jurzik, Marco Kraus,  
 Bernhard Kuhn, Jo  
 Moskalewski, Gerd Müller,  
 Christian Perle, Tim Schürmann,  
 Robert Schwebel, Robert  
 Strunz, Stefanie Teufel, Michael  
 Tepperis von der Ohe

**Design**

vero-design Renate Ettenberger,  
 Tynn Leckey

**Production**

Hubertus Vogg, Stefanie Huber  
 Bernadette Taylor

**Operations Manager**

Pam Shore

**Advertising**

01625 855169  
 Derek Coombes  
 Advertisement Director  
[dcoombes@linux-magazine.co.uk](mailto:dcoombes@linux-magazine.co.uk)  
 Neil Dolan Sales Manager  
[ndolan@linux-magazine.co.uk](mailto:ndolan@linux-magazine.co.uk)  
 Verlagsbüro Ohm-Schmidt  
[Osmund@Ohm-Schmidt.de](mailto:Osmund@Ohm-Schmidt.de)

**Publishing**

Publishing Director

Robin Wilkinson  
[rwilkinson@linux-magazine.co.uk](mailto:rwilkinson@linux-magazine.co.uk)

Subscriptions and back issues  
 01625 850565

Annual Subscription Rate  
 (12 issues)  
 UK: £44.91. Europe (inc Eire):  
 £73.88 Rest the World: £85.52  
 Back issues (UK) £6.25

**Distributors**

COMAG, Tavistock Road, West  
 Drayton, Middlesex  
 England UB7 7QE

**Print**

R. Oldenbourg

Linux Magazine is published monthly by Linux New Media UK,  
 Europa House, Adlington Park, Macclesfield, Cheshire, England,  
 SK10 4NP. Company registered in England.

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ISSN 14715678

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Linux New Media UK Ltd is a division of Linux New Media AG,  
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## Current issues

## FUD



With the demise of Napster's appeal against the record industry, free software has taken a step backward this month. Not to be outdone, Microsoft is up to its old tricks with yet another example of FUD spreading (fear, uncertainty and doubt). Microsoft VP Jim Allchin stated that "Linux is developed in a so-called open-source environment in which the software code generally isn't owned by any one company". 'So-called' – what is he talking about? Is that a bad thing Mr Allchin?

Maybe Jim Allchin has just not understood what open source means. By keeping Linux open source we can ensure that anyone can change it for the better. Bad code will be written out and so we can only improve. Bugs can be fixed by anyone who finds them. As goals change, so can the projects. Not belonging to a proprietary culture means we are not governed by a single executive board's decisions. If such monoliths decide to support only Chinese keyboards because that is the biggest market, we cannot change their choice.

But with open source we have the right to follow whatever path takes our fancy. 'Want to support braille keyboards? Then you have the right and the code to be able to do this. Now admittedly, a company can buy a Microsoft development kit and be licensed to use some of its code hooks. But past experience suggests that if they are too successful then Microsoft is likely to bring out a similar (though not necessarily comparable) product after it has finished developing and marketing. If not, then Microsoft seems to simply take the company over.

This is not quite the same as open source, where no one can stop you developing and

bringing a product to market. Others are free to pursue similar products, with the buying public deciding which is the better just as much as you can choose to better another's project. "Open source is an intellectual-property destroyer," Allchin said. "I can't imagine something that could be worse than this for the software business and the intellectual-property business."

Some businesses do quite well out of open source but more importantly, users do exceedingly well. "I'm an American, I believe in the American Way," Allchin said. "I worry if the government encourages open source, and I don't think we've done enough education of policymakers to understand the threat." I am not sure I even want to comment on this statement, as I believe that Mr Allchin might find my comments offensive. His final comment though, shows that he has a glorious sense of humour: "We can build a better product than Linux," he said. "There is always something enamoring about thinking you can get something for free."

I am always hopeful that Microsoft will produce a better product. I would definitely buy it. I want the best. It would then be something for Linux to aim to better. And yes I do also love the idea of getting something for free. A smile makes me happy. So I will remain with a penguin by my side.

Code well!

John Southern  
 Editor

## GUARANTEE

We pride ourselves on the origins of our magazine which come from the very start of the Linux revolution. We have been involved with Linux market for six years now through our sister European-based titles Linux Magazine (aimed at professionals) and Linux User (for hobbyists), and through seminars, conferences and events.

By purchasing this magazine you are joining an information network that enjoys the benefit of all the knowledge and technical expertise of all the major Linux professionals and enthusiasts. No other UK Linux magazine can offer that pedigree or such close links with the Linux Community. We're not simply reporting on the Linux and open source movement - we're part of it.