News from the GNOME garden
GNOMO**GRAM**

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GNOME and GTK have been attracting more and more followers in recent years. There are now programs for almost every task and new ones are being added daily. Our monthly Gnomogram column is the place to find information on the pearls among the GNOME tools and the latest GNOME rumours.

Helix Code evolves into Ximian

Helix Code has changed its name to Ximian (the X is pronounced as a Z), in order to gain a better legal handle over freeloaders like Helixcode UK. The new, protected name is derived from simian, or ape-like, and to that extent goes well with the old image. Apart from the name, nothing else is changing for the time being. Investors appear not to be bothered by either the new name or the not-so-rosy situation affecting Linux start-ups – according to the news item (third address in URLs boxout) Battery and Charles River Ventures have kitted out Ximian with an additional 15 million US dollars.

Preview of GTK+ 2.0

A little foretaste of the options opened by XFree86 4.0.2 is offered by the screenshots at *http://people.redhat.com/otaylor/gtk/render/*. Not only is the text in soft focus, but Unicode symbols for texts which are read from right to left are also shown. The architecture, with which this was made

possible is called Pango and will in future become part of GTK+. Again with soft focus text, but created independently of X Window are the screenshots at *http://www.lysator.liu.se/~alla/files/diafb.png* and *http://news.gnome.org/gnome-news/978625013/*. With the aid of GtkFB, writing is done directly into the framebuffer, an abstraction from the graphical hardware, which is of particular interest to the embedded domain. Although it will be possible with this to compile GTK applications for the framebuffer, a framebuffer version of GNOME seems unlikely for the time being – GNOME is still based in many respects on X Window.

Cinematic GNOME

As the film Antitrust demonstrates, the open source phenomenon has now even reached Hollywood. The film shows a young programmer, who after a bit of hesitation goes to work for a big software firm, where he finds out just how tough competition can be. Apart from stars like Tim Robbins, the film also includes walk-on parts for GNOME icons Miguel de Icaza, Sun's CEO Scott McNealy and the GNOME desktop itself. But whether that's good enough reason to actually watch the film remains to be seen.

Gtktalog

In the oodles of sparsely-described CDs, which many people now own, it can turn into a real chore to find a certain file. Gtktalog has the remedy; it sets up a

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LZH-Archive: LZH is an outdated archive format, which was very popular under MS-DOS. As in zip or tar.gz archives, here, too, there are several files or whole directory trees in compressed form. The tool for creating and unpacking lzh files under Linux is called lha and also supports Unix-type file attributes (owner, group, access rights).

database with the content of CDs and directories. Apart from the name of the respective file, you can also specify categories and descriptions of the individual files. With the aid of plugins Gtktalog also reads information such as tags from Mp3s or the titles of HTML pages and stores them. Archives are shown in virtual subdirectories by Gtktalog, similarly to Midnight Commander, and can be searched. By default only the file names of archives are read out – for a date of change and other details, you have to select Complete VFS search in *Settings/Search Options*, which results in a larger database.

GnomeKiSS

GnomeKiSS is an implementation of KiSS, the Kisekae Set System, for GNOME and is one of the comparatively few GNOME programs with which even children can get to grips. Kisekae is derived from the Japanese Kisekae Ningju, which means roughly 'play dress-up with dolls'. Like their paper counterparts, the dolls can have their clothes changed using drag and drop. The KiSS Set itself is usually an **LZH archive**, which GnomeKiSS unpacks with the aid of *lha*, with several pictures as well as a colour palette and a configuration file, describing how the individual pictures are arranged. There are numerous expansions of this system, with varying degrees of support from GnomeKiSS: Cherry-KiSS for example offers larger palettes, French-KiSS extends the programmability of KiSS and thus allows for more interactivity. A whole scene of designers has sprung up around KiSS, whose dolls can be found on the Internet – especially popular are the heroines and heroes from the Japanese Anime series, which have now become known in the UK. Many of the very different dolls include hidden effects such as the obligatory blinking of the dolls and little animations together with sound effects. All you need to watch out for is that there are no X-rated ones among the many dolls, but as a rule these are identified as such.

Key combinations under GNOME

Apart from GNOME itself, above all Sawfish offers the option of storing functions as key combinations. Windows keys are especially suitable for this but you must first assign these a key name in the file *~/.Xmodmap*. In the example, the left Windows logo is assigned F28, the right F29 and the menu key F30:

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keycode 115 = F28
keycode 116 = F29
keycode 117 = F30
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These key names can then be specified in the GNOME control centre under *Panel/General*, to open the menu or the *Execute* dialog. The only annoying thing is that it makes a difference whether numlock, capslock etc. are active or not. So, for a key with numlock set, one has to specify Mod2-keyname, or for a key combination with Ctrl Control-Keyname.

Sawfish offers considerably more options for key combinations under *Windowmanager Sawfish/Key shortcuts*: There, most functions of Sawfish and a few of GNOME can be assigned keys. New key combinations are created using *Add*, specifying a key and a command. (Numlock status does not matter in this case). The commands *xterm* and *run shell* command are especially useful: The former starts a terminal program specified under *Windowmanager Sawfish/Other*, and the second can be used to call up any program you like. ∎

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Figure 1: All Mp3s at a glance with Gtktalog

[above]
Figure 2: Sam & Max from the adventure of the same name