

linux.conf.au 2003

Linux down under

First it happened in Sydney, afterwards in Melbourne, a year later Brisbane took over, and finally it reached the magnificent West Australian city of Perth: "It" carries the name "linux.au.conf" and happens to be Australia's annual Linux technical conference. **BY DAVYD MADELEY**

From the 20th to 25th of January, the University of Western Australia, played host to the biggest and the best linux.conf.au [1] so far, with registrations filling to 110 percent of capacity. Some 400+ people descended on the event, surprising organisers, who had only catered for 350 at most. Even during the first two days, before the bulk of the talks had started, it seemed vibrant. People from all over the world were meeting, greeting and discussing their common passion, Linux.

The first two days, Monday and Tuesday being designated the mini-conf days, weren't all that official. There were conferences on Debian, IPv6, Linux in education and Linux gaming. The Debian mini-conference involved about one third of the delegates, roping in speakers such as Debian project leader Bdale Garbee, and release manager Anthony "AJ" Towns.

Linus, the penguin

Wednesday denoted the start of the official conference, with registrations starting at a bright and early 8am. The Octagon theatre was packed as people waited for the official opening. Organiser

James Bromberger didn't leave them disappointed, informing them it was true; we did have a special guest. At this point he indicated to Tux the penguin, who was waddling across the stage. People cheered as Tux again waddled off stage and James continued to welcome everyone. Then came the real surprise. Again, Tux waddled out, however this time, without his costume head. Revealing the man inside the costume to be none other than Linus Torvalds.

Wednesday and Thursday proceeded very much to plan, with tutorials by Rusty Russell, Rasmus Lerdorf and a host of others. ARQuake (Augmented Reality Quake) was popular, as was the presentation on distcc, a program to distribute the compilation of C or C++ code across several machines.

Samba style engineering

Andrew Tridgell gave everyone an extended lecture on reverse engineering networking protocols, using his experience in the Samba project. Bdale told us Debian was older than humanity, and Rusty Russell... well, Rusty contradicted the statement he made last year, informing us that kernel hackers are in fact wimps. If you want to get the babes, become a toolchain hacker.

Friday continued with the presentation of more papers. Hemos from Slashdot, H. Peter Anvin and Alan Cox all did their part. The days' paper session was followed by the



Cyberknights & Linux Australia

Figure 1: The kernel of the penguin

"Birds of a Feather" groups (BOFs). These included Python versus Perl, alt.sysadmin.recovery and who the coolest kernel hacker is.

Friday night was also the conference dinner. Held at Currie Hall, the university's own hall of residence, the function was attended by some 300 delegates. Friendly discussion, the meeting of new people, wine and beer went on well into the night. Saturday, the last day of the conference, seemed a little sadder. With people recovering from the night before, the atmosphere seemed slightly dimmed.

The closing seemed almost as overwhelming as the opening. Tux made another appearance, this time it wasn't Linus. Instead he presented Linus, the other speakers and the organisers with bottles of wine from the local Swan Valley; aptly labelled, "Penguin Pee".

People hung around to ask questions of the speakers, have Linus sign their shirts and exchange PGP keys, but unfortunately it was over for another year. Next year the conference will be in Adelaide, South Australia. Of course, Adelaide hopes to be bigger and better still, while retaining the relaxed atmosphere linux.conf.au is famous for. ■

INFO

[1] <http://www.linux.conf.au/>,
<http://www.linux.org.au/>



Figure 2: It's dinner time at linux.conf.au