

Letters to the editor

Write access

■ No smack on the wrists

I was rather amused by the letter written by David Bartlett about using American English in the June 2003 issue titled “A smack on the wrists” (Linux Magazine, Issue 31, p18). I, being from the United States, don’t have a problem with you using “proper English”, and I actually find it interesting to see other dialects and languages.

I am sure most Americans don’t even realise (or is it realize) that the British use a different style (or language as Mr. Bartlett would have it). I was introduced to the British style by reading programming books from Wrox Press, and have since come to notice most of the differences in our dialect from “the proper one”. It doesn’t bother me a bit so, keep on writing your magazine the way you feel best, I read it for the great content myself.

Russell Gordon, Houston, USA

■ Linux Magazine Reviewed

I’ve been a subscriber of your magazine for 6 months now. In those six months you’ve shared your experience and information with me and I thought I’d return the favor. So here it is: The Linux Magazine reviewed by me. ;-)

When you take that giant leap in life where you stop considering using Linux and actually start doing it, you tend to hit a very hard wall. Your old favorite magazines start to disappoint you. Aiming at the Linux newbie, they never get any further than installing a major distribution. And the new magazines you try tend to overwhelm you with technical data as they are aiming at the expert users.

Its hard finding a source of information that aims at the advanced – that terrible void between newbie and expert. I tried several magazines and none of them really could do this. Except this one. Its focus varies from useless-but-fun to functional-and-serious.

There’s the Linux User section, which shows you how to have fun with your

system in a easy-to-understand way without treating you like a moron. Then there’s the Sysadmin section, which goes a little deeper without falling in too many details and taking it too seriously.

Let’s not forget the kernel section (aka The Funny Pages) which lets you know that some people DO take it very seriously and that it’s a good thing that they do. Last but not least, there’s also a Know How section which does what the Linux HOWTOs should do but don’t because they are out of date, don’t take distributions into account, expect you to have a masters degree in creating a working processor from 2 matches, a piece of paper and some duct tape, etc.

There are some things that could be improved however:

The CDROM:

A lot of the time the software won’t install because of missing dependencies. At which point you still need the internet to get the needed libraries.

Secondly, certain applications keep returning on the CD. Often a new version has been released, but wouldn’t it be better to dedicate this space to applications which haven’t been mentioned before?

On the other hand, the contents page and structure of the CD are a perfect example of how it should be done. Good-looking (in all browsers) without being bloated and – more importantly – very well organized: version number directly on the content page; URLs where appropriate; deb and rpm files when available; minimal clicking required, etc. All I miss is a list of needed dependencies; this wouldn’t solve the above-mentioned problem, but it would make it less frustrating.

The Hardware Reviews:

Although the hardware reviews are good reviews, they are mostly about very professional and expensive hardware, or about one single item. I miss reviews about “normal-people-hardware” and



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comparisons, especially related to their Linux support. For example: an inkjet printer review in which you test the 10 printers that sold the most in the last year and score them on support, installation, Linux documentation, quality, working features, and so on.

Seasoned Linux users know which companies offer Linux drivers and they know how and where to find out whether their hardware of choice is supported. But there’s a whole new horde of Linux users who don’t. They come in great numbers and normally return to Windows when their new hardware doesn’t work, blaming Linux.

Conclusion: After six months of subscription I know that this was money well spent. Linux Magazine keeps a great balance between fun and functional, simple and complicated. The subtitle “Advanced Linux Know-How” does indeed sum it up perfectly. I’m already looking forward to the next issue.

Thank you for all your hard work.

Liese De Vos, Oostende, Belgium

LM Thank you very much for your comments, they are greatly appreciated. Regarding the dependencies – it is practically impossible for us to deliver everything needed, as each reader could theoretically have a different installation. We do take the constructive criticism very seriously, and we always aim to improve the quality of the magazine and hopefully help more Linux users such as yourself! ■