

Letters to the editor

Write access

Linux – usable or not?

Sorry, but I will not be renewing my subscription. Linux has been a huge disappointment to me. I may try it again in a year or so, but I have found what it gains in speed and reliability, it loses on usability.

I have spent dozens of hours searching out obscure commands and subtle configuration file settings, only partially successfully, compared to less than a day to set up Apache, PHP4 and MySQL on a windows box.

Linux thoroughly deserves its reputation as an environment for Geek's. All I want to do, is get a job done, not waste hours just preparing to get a job done. Anybody who thinks it's clever to remember obscure commands and settings, when a checkbox or drop down menu can do the job in a fraction of the time, is a deluded fool.

Best of luck with the magazine, I really would like Linux to knock Microsoft off its dominant position. But you will never do it, unless Linux becomes much easier to set up and use.

David Joyner, by email

LM We are genuinely sorry that you feel this way. There are so many different distributions of Linux; some are more suitable for use than others. What that use is depends on your particular set of



WebMin being used for Apache configuration

needs. Because needs vary, we have choice. It would be interesting to find out what your original choice was, it may just have been bad for you.

Slackware and Gentoo are fine distributions but you do need to have a solid background in how to set them up. I would be surprised to hear you had reached these conclusions from a boxed set of, say, SuSE Professional or Mandrake. Here, you are spoilt for Wizards and tools to help you set up your system.

The applications that you called into question do also have front-end user interface tools to take away the pain of configuration. WebMin makes for an excellent tool when configuring Apache and MySQL.

Use Xvid instead of DivX

In the September issue of Linux Magazine in your cover article "Movies at Home" you recommend the use of DivX. For those who want MPEG-4 Xvid is a good alternative to DivX. Even better, Xvid is Open Source GPL licensed software. More information and downloads are available at <http://xvid.org/>.

Alan Horkan, Dublin.

Linux ISPs

I live in the UK and at present I am trying to find an internet service provider that recognizes Linux. Can you help me?

John Sawbridge, by e-mail

LM The UK does have Linux recognized ISPs. The only question is, to what degree do you want Linux support?

You can opt for complete Linux using and supporting ISPs, such as UKFSN <http://www.ukfsn.org/> or UK Linux <http://www.uklinux.net/>.

You could choose ISPs who have been known to help on technical problems: Demon <http://www.demon.net>, netsimple <http://www.netsimple.co.uk/>, UK shells <http://www.ukshell.com/> or csoft.net <http://www.csoft.net/>. ISPs with Linux help pages include



Please send your comments and suggestions to letters@linux-magazine.com

Zetnet <http://www.zetnet.com/> or Free serve <http://www.freeseve.com/>.

The majority of ISPs after these will support Linux. You may need to ask them for some information such as POP server names and dial up numbers, but unless they use particular Windows-specific software, nothing should stop you. NTLWorld normally requires a Windows box to subscribe initially, but there are ways around this. AOL/TimeWarner is probably the only one in the UK which does not support Linux.

If you need more access, then the Co-Location services provide you with a Linux box such as Digital networks <http://www.dnuk.com/homepage.php> or 1&1 UK <http://oneandone.co.uk>.

Easier KDE tabs

Here's some feedback to your "KDE Tricks" article in Linux Magazine, Issue 34, p43. The following sequence facilitates the labelling of console tabs with the name of the working directory:

```
export PROMPT_COMMAND='echo -ne
"\033]30;${PWD}:${#PWD}<20?0:-
20:20 \007"'
```

and the following makes it even easier

```
export PROMPT_COMMAND='X=...'
; echo -ne "\033]30;${X:0:${#
PWD}<20?0:3}${PWD}:${#PWD}<20?0:
-20:20 \007"'
```

Michael Tomuschat, by e-mail