

TuxOS (Debian-Based)

Source: <http://www.derkeiler.com/Newsgroups/comp.os.linux.security/2002-03/0826.html>

From: Geometric Engineer (geo_engineer@yahoo.com)

Date: 03/23/02

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Peter Whysall <peter@guildenstern.dyndns.org> wrote on 2002-03-22:

> *Symlinking /dev/mouse to /dev/psaux wouldn't hurt THAT*
> *much, would it?*

One wonders if hardware detection ought to be a separate matter, whereupon the hardware detection routines (on a dedicated floppy diskette) write the system hardware configuration to an XML file, which is then used later to cross-check that symlinks such as you mention, plus other matters, are actually correct, or to ask a remote server to analyze it and prepare a custom kernel plus a package set (Debian, TuxOS) to be burned to ISO just for that machine and set of add-on cards (hardware detection routine also asks about wanted functionality and the easily-seen peripherals such as printer and USB keyboard). This practice would allow a commercial opportunity for companies to make a little money offering such customized ISO sets, which would in turn stoke interest in Linux (especially with extreme attention to making sure all hardware was supported up front in advance, with no terrifying arcane fiddliness with the command line and poorly documented hardware support modules and not even Midnight Commander).

It could be a two-floppy boot and root system with ability to write to separate FAT floppy diskette such data for all "try hard" installations with any available tools (Linux, Windows, DOS, whatever) meant specifically to break the nasty Microsoft habit of brutal monopolisation of the master boot record (and tricks in partition table) to make it on purpose hard to install dual-boot competing and much better operating systems such as IBM OS/2 Warp or Debian or (*cough*) TuxOS (see below).

There could even be a minor "Jolt'n'pizza money" industry of doing rigorous hardware evaluations in

which weird BIOS settings are fixed with the special toolkits and oddball hardware is noted that would otherwise would escape the detection routines and a box is even opened up physically as necessary for the owner to get from the Linux nerd a paper on which is written all important such information plus a floppy diskette (with two backups for safety) with same such information to be used over the Internet or at a local computer shop for custom compilation of kernel and package assemblage or from Linux installfest for free and no need to unplug everything and yank around hardware which most people will not do out of fear of breaking something or because they already have this "Windows something" on their "computers" and they don't wanna be bothered with all that complicated nasty Linux stuff if it's so much work.

(Accurate hardware detection and adaptation theretofore by the installation, clean boot handling for dual-boot and partition resizing (including automatic outside third-party defragmentation of existing partitions), clear unambiguous functionality for a total newbie (not too much, not too few programs, and all are available both on desktop with nice icons and in cleanly organized menus), are part of requirements for success for Linux against well-trenchcoated Windows with allegedly embedded MSIE like alien sucking on face and included utilities that formerly were thriving third-party companies (anyone remember those Microsoft buyouts and little-company bankruptcies from yesteryear)).

> *Networking configuration. Or the complete and utter
> absence thereof. For a distro that wants to install
> off the internet, not detecting, configuring and using
> an absolutely bog-standard 3Com 3C590 10MBit card is a
> bit heinous. I had to edit /etc/network/interfaces myself,
> and the card never did get its module loaded automatically
> and interface started until I had created a 2.4.18 kernel
> package. When this was installed, it all Just Worked.*

I entirely agree, and would like to add this to the TuxOS distribution I'm now laboriously building from a carefully selected subset of the excellent but more general Debian distribution (Woody and bits of Sid) (it's a long story, talk more about it later when a minimalized but still internationalised full-set is ready).

(BTW, to anyone else reading this, it's been impossible to get the attention of the people at [iBiblio]. Where can a set of ISO's be mirrored? [SourceForge]? I have already reserved the domain name [<http://www.tuxos.org/>]).

[<http://www.ibiblio.org/pub/Linux/>]

[<http://sourceforge.net/>]

- > *As I've pointed out to Karsten (and others) in the past,*
- > *FreeBSD has this down pat – two floppies and you're away*
- > *– in stark contrast to the 13–17 floppies you need for*
- > *Debian, and networking config is a solved problem. OK,*
- > *FreeBSD sucks rocks once it's installed, but you get the*
- > *idea :)*

One wonders if a two-floppy set of this FreeBSD could be used with a custom program to instead install Debian Woody onto the hard drive over the network. I'm not fussy myself about tools as long as they are good with which to begin. Would the FreeBSD people blow a gasket? If this said, "Installation brought to you courtesy of FreeBSD." with a full set of links for checking them out, would that help or make them even madder and bring out the torches and pitchforks?

- > *There needs to be apt tasks for GNOME and KDE. If*
- > *there are, I can't see them. Not that I want to*
- > *install KDE, mind, but a simple method of zapping*
- > *it when I find it would be nice :)*

Planned for TuxOS, among other more fine-grained controls and a system of carefully controlling this level of cruft (unwanted programs) without an annoying level of detail for absolute newbies. The Debian package control system is too good to not take advantage of it fully for such purposes. I've thought through how to exploit it for a fully-accessible desktop that can be actually capable of fighting Windows 95/98/Me/NT/2000/XP. There have been other attempts, but they all miss[ed] some critically important details about the "Joe Blow" desktop mentality, or are just too commercial and do not show respect to the hard work of open-source community and run right up to Microsoft and poke them in eye with stick just to be funny and be sued by very large corporation with trillions of aggressive scary lawyers.

[<http://www.lindows.com/>]

[<http://www.distrowatch.com/lindows.php>]

[<http://www.lycoris.com/>]

[<http://www.distrowatch.com/lycoris.php>]

(also Corel, and Storm, and many others)

- > *Aptitude and apt-utils should be part of the base install.*
- > *Too useful not to have.*

Noted as an excellent suggestion for the "expert" subsystem of TuxOS (the base underlying installation as well as the minimal bare-bones and stark system that can be installed by pressing the "expert" button which unhides everything and sends newbies screaming into the night). ;^]

> *Perl whined about locales (I use en_GB) until I ran the locale configurator thing – this should have been part of the post-first-boot config.*

Noted as an excellent suggestion for all levels. Internationalisation is a very high priority for TuxOS, particularly anti-aliased font support for all languages, and ability to produce PDF and professional documents in all languages with click of button from any format document (quite hard to do, very much detail and [LaTeX]/[TeX]/[pdflatex]/[etc.] are complex to set up for it so even total newbies can do it without tearing hair and the throwing against floor with temper tantrums and nasty looks at poor little Tux penguin who just wants to be happy with fishes and icebergs).

> *xinetd should be the default rather than plain inetd.*

Hoo-boy. I agree, I agree! I wish the UTF8 versions also of many packages would be used as default, unless there's something I'm missing (this is great task that is enormous and there are many obvious stuffs I'm still learning).

> *I scored a big win when I chose to use ext3 on my old Red Hat install rather than Reiser, as it meant the relatively vanilla 2.2.19 kernel on the floppies could happily read my existing partitions, and I had no "is the kernel actually going to mount /home?" moments.*

How hard is it, do you know, to install ReiserFS or even XFS reliably on a new installation? Boot is extremely important, especially soothing and routine ("you can still get to your Windows XP anytime, no worries")? The ReiserFS and XFS are great marketing (yes, marketing for free software) advantages not at which to sneeze, eh? (TuxOS will with any luck become the marketing triumph for the "user-friendly" layer of Debian. The people at Debian tend to be extremely ... uhm ... technical and also far too often snarl "RTFM" without even saying which manual, which page, where, and why is it confusing and written for someone who thinks like uncontrolled out-of-scope GOTO's?)

I have nasty upsetting idea also for making Linux (Debian, TuxOS) default boot, with Windows 95/98/Me/NT/2000/XP even only accessible from a floppy diskette (special Windows program to make from existing Windows installation), thus turning tables on Microsoft, heh-heh! Plus, write special programs (commercial companies or open-source, no matter) to scrounge all important data for Windows programs off Windows partitions and turn into Linux programs data format and let user know when Windows what is no longer handling anything not done by Linux and would the user like to get back all that space for his nice Linux programs by wiping partition to get it back from Windows and use all for [MP3]'s and such? Ha-ha, make ol' Uncle Fester cry, very funny! Make simple one-click program to wipe it! Run [xmms] with [ogg] of scrubba-scrubba dirt go away, la-la-la. Make cool DivX movie automatically play after finished, see Tux waddling off into sunset and beautiful music and happy, happy, joy joy!

[<http://www.xmms.org/>]

[<http://www.xiph.org/ogg/vorbis/>]

[<http://www.usethesource.com/PopCulture/01/07/06/1556240.shtml>]

> *In the installer, I like the flexibility of being able
> to jump around and do different things. What I don't like
> is not being able to see a quick summary of what's been
> selected/done so far. Even if it just said "I'm gonna mount
> / on /dev/hda1, there's an active swap partition at /dev/hda2,
> and you haven't installed anything yet" that would be good.*

Yes, agree is very important (always feedback on where you are now and how much is to go and what has been done, with easily adjustable levels of detail for experts and for absolute no-details newbies who like all one-click and bright shiny buttons and the nice games).

> *No help whatsoever in installing or configuring the grub
> bootloader. While grub is an uber-neato bit of software,
> it's a total bear to set up at first. I actually gave up
> and went back to LILO for the sake of convenience – I think
> I could have spent the entire evening just playing with grub.*

Not sure [grub] is truly necessary, but it's in the "TuxOS approved" list and will be on the planned ISO's with automated setup (really need help with the details of so many packages such as [grub] for setup, to wean away Windows people who even cry at the terrible sight of a [dmesg] dump). BTW, have you seen this for [lilo]? What do you of think it ?

[<http://www.gamers.org/~quinet/lilo/penguins.html>]

- > *All in all, though, a rewarding experience. At the end of*
- > *the evening I had a fully functional Linux system running*
- > *GNOME, with Evo and Galeon in place and working. No user*
- > *data was ever lost and my Windows partition (gotta play*
- > *games, dontcha know) was unaffected.*

Curious what all think of mixing "current best-practice" programs amongst KDE and GNOME and X, such as [AbiWord] for KDE and GNOME both, or natch OpenOffice (messy, terrible [*].deb] problem I understand right now with huge no-split binaries), with *no* [kate] or [kedit] but with [nedit] included for all of KDE and GNOME and X, etc. Does this make one want to turn purple in face and try to scream loud enough to knock down walls? (No worry, nasty yucky [vim] (or like) and nasty yucky [jed] (or [joe]) will be in basic TuxOS ISO for all those hard-core Linux experts still in 1970's and punch cards and weird haircuts. ;^]

[<http://www.nedit.org/>]

[<http://www.abiword.com>]

TuxOS is in any case meant to later include visualization and optimization tools to make easy selections from all TuxOS or even all Debian packages (if TuxOS subset is too limiting), for own custom version of TuxOS to be sold or given away or posted for download as ISO's or as meta-package(s), smaller for firewall or server or rescue toolkit, or different or specialised otherwise (think specific to language or profession such as French, Russian or Hebrew, medical or legal or publisher, or all maybe on a single CD-R for easy simple cheap copy passed out to poor friends in the same language in a third world country or to same profession or in same office for rapid similar deployment with no poring over a million packages to see which are good for certain profession or special job such as toxic waste cleanup or emergency response team (Red Cross)).

(Also need legal advice on how to handle a very security-oriented version of TuxOS with automatic and cleanly handled encryption of all communications as a default (this has been a major chicken and egg problem for universal GPG (or PGP) use by people of all expertise levels). Can't be exported without big trouble, what is best handling too of patent-protected programs? Still wading a day at a time through that stuff, very difficult to tricky navigate waters. Also need legal advice with making TuxOS non-profit and owned by volunteers only with free use always of TuxOS as with Debian, that is a major pain, don't know where to begin and am only the one single person trying to do

everything by himself for now).

Cheers, Meme Engineer

P.S. [TSE Pro] ("The SemWare Editor Professional") still rocks! All other editors (except [nedit] and [UltraEdit]) suck! Bwa-ha-ha-ha!

[<http://www.semware.com/>]

[<http://www.ultraedit.com/>]

P.P.S. Inferno looks nice, but dear God that hotty name would make marketers sob uncontrollably. "Use this operating system to go to HELL!!!" TuxOS is a much nicer name and it's free! Free! Free!

[<http://www.vitanuova.com/inferno/>]

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