he Complete RedHat Linux Installation Guide 5.2
Karl-Peter Gottschalk

ating: Excellent

Pros: Marketed as book with operating system included, or operating system with book included, it is everything you need to get Linux onto your computer if it is an Intel, Alpha or SPARC machine. If you have a PowerPC Mac, then you will also need the LinuxPPC http://www.linuxppc.org/ kernel and BootX.

Cons: The process is anything but straightforward, hence this 386-page installation manual.

Categories: Operating Systems

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n the sacred principle that my enemy's enemy is my friend, and due to the fact that the Mac OS is so rapidly evolving into a form of Linux or rather UNIX itself with Apple's keen embrace of NeXT's NeXTStep operating system technology, we cover matters Linux from time to time .

MacOS 8.6, with its absorption of the celebrated Mach microkernel, is to arrive in the northern hemisphere's Spring of 1999, our Autumn, and will be a foretaste of late 1999's MacOS X, which will be the true union of UNIX and the Mac GUI.

Why Linux?

Linux is the operating system that has been causing shivers of terror up the gelid spines of the robber barons of mediocrity in Redmond, Washington, and a box of Red Hat 5.1 was the "evidence" that one of their paid toadies clutched and waved around in court recently during the beginnings of the US Department of Justice trial of Microsoft over its monopolistic practices (to put it nicely), one of many such trials going on right now. The Microsoft lawyer chose to show Red Hat Linux 5.1 off to the court as "proof" that Microsoft was not entirely evil (my interpretation and words) simply because they had permitted this upstart rival OS to exist.

But of course Gates and his minions could not kill off Linux, as they have murdered hundreds of other potential corporate rivals and upstarts, even if they threw all their vast blood-baying hordes at it.
In comparison with Microsoft's monolithic software development modus operandi, Linux is the collective product of thousands of independent programmers, linked together by virtue of the Internet, their effort coordinated by Finnish Linux founder Linus Torvalds, working to build better OS components and Graphical User Interfaces and utilities and applications for distribution and use for free, that is right, free!, by anyone game enough to give it a go.
To destroy Linux, Gates would have to do something nasty to geeks beyond measure all around the world, and right now there are some 7 million of them running and contributing to Linux, according to Time. *

A real OS on an Intel chip? Knock me dead with a feather!
Readers may not share my disdain for either the Windows operating system in all its flavours and the vast majority of its software, or for the Intel chips upon which it runs, with their grossly outmoded CISC (Complex Instruction Set Computing) architecture.
Mine is a disgust at all the profligate waste of so much of the planet's resources and talent in the cause of one sad, vile little man's grotesquely overblown greed, perverting an information revolution that should have really liberated us into one that enslaves us to his mediocrity and the inability of a huge organisation of otherwise talented individuals to come up with anything half worthwhile.
There is a great deal of truth in the Microsoft joke, "How many Microsoft programmers does it take to come up with a decent program?" The joke answer, and the real one is, "More!". But it must be conceded that Intel made a major blunder in rejecting RISC (Reduced Instruction Set Computing) chip architecture at a time when CISC was already showing its age.
Rejection of an upstart concept in favour of the old and tried and true is the classic mistake of an oversized and overconfident corporation too hidebound in tradition to change its ways to better accomodate the future. Now Intel is flailing desperately, its allegedly revolutionary Merced chip is getting further and further behind schedule, has already been outdone by Compaq / DEC's Alpha RISC chip, and Intel themselves have acquired off Apple and its partners the Newton-powering StrongARM RISC chip technology whilst making a major investment in Red Hat Linux together with Netscape, in an attempt to escape from under the thumb of Microsoft and their own misguided past decisions.

The evidence is that Intel has failed to adapt and evolve as it should have, and is now trying to make up for its foolishness. Intel's longstanding alliance with fellow 1,000-pound gorilla-turned-dinosaur Microsoft has cost them dear. Time will tell whether both will follow the same path to extinction as their reptilian role models. So, no doubt, will Time.

Why not give Linux a go?

That aside, there are still a number of computers in use that run on the Intel chip and its clones, at least 374 million according to the same Time report. As Microsoft and the Microsoft brown-nosing press always boast, Windows is the most popular operating system, but only due to the combined machinations of Microsoft, Intel and the various Wintel computer hardware manufacturers.

And IBM in the distant past, although when Microsoft cut the throat of OS/2, their halfhearted joint effort with IBM, and began promoting a truly lousy version of Windows as its replacement, the big blue giant finally came to its senses and realised it had been spawning an enemy in its own camp for all those years. Too late, almost, as IBM began a series of downsizing operations that nearly destroyed it.

So I am promoting Linux as an alternative OS and as a learning experience in advance of MacOS X, for current Windows victims sick of seeing blue screens daily, and Mac geeks wanting to learn something of what will exist beneath the surface of version X, and as a spit in the face of Gates and company.

Download http://www.redhat.com/ a free copy of Linux or buy it in the form of this book and its Red Hat Linux distribution and you are in effect hawking up a big one to decorate the visage of the über-geek. Just imagine a green and gooey liquid bogey† dribbling down the cheek of King Nerd, as he splutters and chokes and flails his puny little arms in impotent rage, Coke-bottle glasses steaming, eyes blinking furiously like a strobe light.

It ain't going to be easy, folks

It is not as if owners of Intel chip-equipped computers have had much choice of OSs, until now that is. Always the victims of those out to exploit them (which is why I usually refer to them as Windows victims, because Microsoft has never displayed any propensity for giving people what they really need, but rather what will generate the maximum profit and power for Microsoft über alles), Intel computer owners now have a viable alternative.

Right now the only thing holding them back is a combination of Windowsworld's classic FUD (Fear, Uncertainty and Doubt), and a relative shortage of applications. But such factors have not affected such hardy pioneers as Norm Jacobowitz, who now runs his SOHO consultancy business entirely on Linux. ‡

But you can run a business with it.

As Jacobowitz says in justification, "Personally, I'm looking for stability, ease of use and administration, low costs and a wide range of available productivity applications. ...We've got work to do and no time for a flaky OS. We don't have time to reboot every half hour or to retype a document lost due to the failures of an inadequate operating system."

A perfect argument for the Mac OS of course, but for the fact that Jacobowitz has already made a heavy investment in Intel-inside hardware. He continues, "Have you ever had MS Windows inexplicably freeze in the middle of a budget calculation? Have you ever lost two hours of work when a 'General Protection Fault' crashes your word-processing session? I have had bad experiences ranging from mild frustration to major loss of income due to system crashes. However, I have never - not once - lost data due to an OS failure in Linux."

Installing and running Linux presented a steep learning curve in the initial stages for Jacobowitz, but as he reports it has cost him far less in time and money and lost income than Windows ever did. He can extend the operational life of his hardware far beyond the short lifetime that each iteration of Windows allows.
And Linux itself and the free and commercial applications available for it are improving all the time, with a vast number of them included on a typical distribution on CD-ROM. The Complete RedHat Linux 5.2 Operating System Deluxe package that this book is a part of comprises three CD-ROMs and one floppy disc, includes the most-used Web server - Apache, GIMP (the GNU Image Manipulation Program) and a host of other utilities, languages, environments and libraries.

I am going to do it for myself.
So far I have not followed the Linux route, as I have much better things to spend my hard-won cash on than a piece of second rate Intel hardware, but of course will accept a free gift or two! Anyone got a spare Pentium with monitor? Nothing fancy mind you, just enough RAM and hard drive space to run RedHat, GIMP and GNOME on. A minimum of 8MB RAM, '386, '486, Pentium or Pentium II processor, SCSI or IDE CD-ROM drive, 3.5" floppy drive, and at least 900M of hard drive space to spare.
In the short term, I have arranged access to some Intel boxes at a new media facility, and will install RedHat Linux 5.2 on one of them shortly.
Wish me luck!

* Time ,Australian edition, November 2, 1998, page 58: Lord of the Geeks, by Janice Maloney.

† Please note that the word bogey has different meanings in different English-speaking cultures. In this case, it means sputum, spit or expectoration.

‡ Linux Journal: The Monthly Magazine of the Linux Community, ihttp://www.linuxjournal.com/ssue 52, August 1998, page 26: Migrating to Linux, Part 1, by Norman M. Jacobowitz.

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