GAMING ON LINUX

The tastiest brain candy to relax those tired neurons

TENTACLES OF CTHULU

Liam Dawe is our Games Editor and the founder of gamingonlinux.com, the home of Tux gaming on the web.

SteamOS, from Valve, is a Linux distribution aimed solely at gaming, with Valve's own patches included to increase performance of various systems within the distribution. SteamOS was one of the major announcements that Valve made in September 2013, alongside its own gaming controller (the Steam Controller), and also its console-like Steam Machines. The distribution will be pre-installed on Steam Machines, removing a barrier to Linux adoption.

SteamOS has gained positive feedback from quite a few big names in the indie gaming scene, including Markus "Notch" Persson, creator of Minecraft, and DICE, the creator of the Battlefield series of first person shooters. But the really fantastic thing about Valve pushing Linux so profusely is that it has led the leading graphics card manufacturers (Nvidia and AMD) to improve their graphics driver performance.

Valve has recently open sourced two internal projects, the first being its Direct3D to OpenGL translation layer, which could prove useful for other big name developers in saving time when porting to Linux.
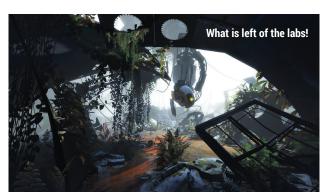
The second of these big projects is the new OpenGL debugger named "Vogl", which should help developers boost performance and find bottlenecks in their OpenGL rendering. To put it simply, performance of games for us Linux gamers in future should improve if they use Vogl. Onwards and upwards!
Liam Dawe, gamingonlinux.com

Portal 2
Prepare to return to the Aperture Science Labs.

Look out puzzle fans – here comes a big one! Valve, our new benevolent gaming overlord, has unleashed the Linux beta version of its highly praised sequel to Portal, and appropriately named this beast Portal 2. It was originally released in 2007, and Linux users now get to join in on the fun as Valve pushes more games our way.

Something important to remember is the fact that it is in beta, so there will be certain bugs and issues you may come across, but it is still well worth a look.

What is left of the labs!

Portal 2 is a first-person puzzle game involving a special gun that opens portals between two places for you to jump through and overcome obstacles. This sequel includes a co-op mode too, so you can solve puzzles with your friends – we suggest playing the single-player first.
http://store.steampowered.com/app/620

The Dark Mod
Did you just see something move? Nah, just my imagination…

Open-source developers are at it again! The Dark Mod has finally released a stable version and it is simply fantastic. The Dark Mod is inspired by the Thief series of games and plays a lot like the older games in the series. It was originally a mod for Doom 3, before it became a standalone game.

The game is all about stealth: you play a hooded ninja-like figure who is on a mission hunting valuables. You have to be careful though – the swordsmen of the land don't take too kindly to thieves.

The Dark Mod is set in a Gothic steampunk city and

Peekaboo! Oh wait, I'm supposed to be stealthy!

looks simply beautiful. It is easily one of the best-looking free and open-source games around at the moment.

You can even create and download mission packs for The Dark Mod, as it doubles as a friendly toolkit as well as a game, so be sure to share your favourite packs with us on the Linux Voice forum.
www.thedarkmod.com/main

Wasteland 2

Massive robo-scorpions and other nasties await you.

RPG fans, get ready to be excited, as Wasteland 2 – one of the biggest crowdfunded projects ever, having raised over $2.9m on Kickstarter from 61,290 backers – is making its way onto a computer near you. Wasteland 2 is also the project that helped to get a Linux export option in the Unity3D game toolkit, so the developers do of course plan a Linux version as well as OS X and Windows versions.

Wasteland 2 is a post-apocalyptic turn-based RPG game with beautiful graphics and solid-looking gameplay. We don't have many good RPG games like it, so it's a welcome addition to our game library. It is a direct sequel to the 1988 game Wasteland, which also has a Linux version now.

The Linux version of Wasteland 2 hasn't landed yet, but it is expected soon, as it has only recently become part of Steam's Early Access program, although if you do

The original Wasteland was released in 1988, and has since been re-released for Linux.

buy it now and consider it a pre-order of sorts you will get a copy of Wasteland 1 for free, which is quite the classic.
http://wasteland.inxile-entertainment.com

Oil Rush

Prepare your tactical warfare skills for when the oil runs out.

I hope you don't get sea-sick! Oil Rush may have been out for a while, but it's still not the best-known game. It's sad because it's actually quite brilliant.

Oil Rush is a mix of a real-time strategy and a tower defence game, set in a world ruined by nuclear war changing the planet forever. It was an early supporter of the Linux platform, and when it came out it was one of the most graphically intensive games we had (it is still easily in the top 10 in that respect).

There is no micro-management to be had; you don't even control the units directly during battle, so it's easy to get into, but hard to master.
http://oilrush-game.com

OpenXcom

An open source engine for one of the greatest games ever made.

OpenXcom is why we love open source. It has revived a true classic – UFO: Enemy Unknown, a strategy game from another era in computing, originally released in 1994 for DOS and Amiga.

You will need the game files from somewhere like **gog.com**, but it will be well worth the minor effort involved.

UFO: Enemy Unknown pits humans vs aliens in a mix between real-time strategy on a planetary view and turn-based tactical combat when you shoot a UFO down. You will need to capture and research the aliens while keeping the world happy with funding you raise from the nations of the world.
http://openxcom.org