

LINUX VOICE YOUR LETTERS



Got something to say? An idea for a new magazine feature? Or a great discovery? Email us: letters@linuxvoice.com

LINUX VOICE STAR LETTER

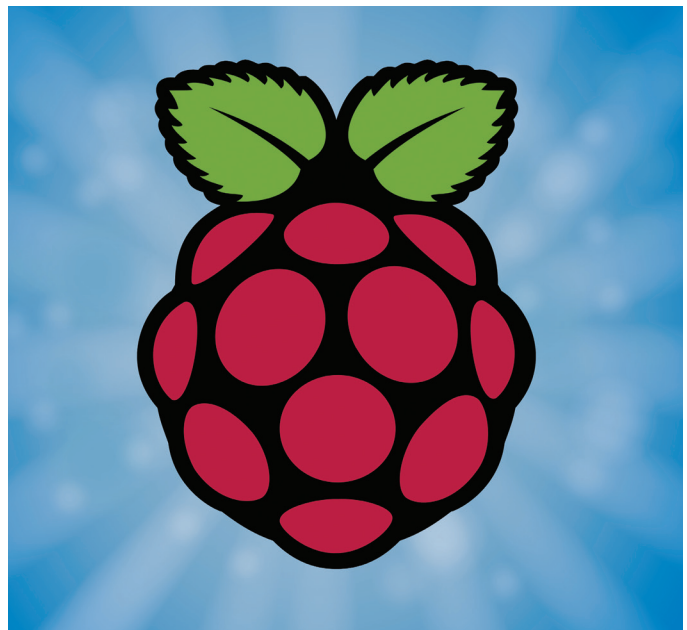
GARDEN PI

Your projects for the Raspberry Pi have been great fun (eg a distress beacon for when the zombies come and how to construct a Mars rover) as well as practical (the BrewPi and smart cycling jacket). I was wondering if it's possible to use the RPi in the garden to water hanging baskets automatically. Could a solar-powered RPi be used to pump/trickle-feed rain water from a water butt, through a piece of narrow tubing and into a hanging basket? If this could be done, it would allow us to keep the plants alive when hiding from zombies, or even whilst on holiday.

Les Waters, Hempstead

Andrew says: That's a great idea, and just in time for the end of the growing season. A friend of mine is using a Raspberry Pi for this exact purpose; I'll ask her how she did it and report back. And if we could only persuade the zombies to eat plants instead of brains, we'd solve two birds with one ARM-powered stone.

Ben is working away in his shed right now on a Raspberry Pi-powered face recognition system, hooked up to an Arduino, a robot arm and a Nerf gun, and Graham is brewing the next batch of BrewPi Linux Voice ale. That's the great thing about the Raspberry Pi: it's so versatile that the only limit is your imagination.



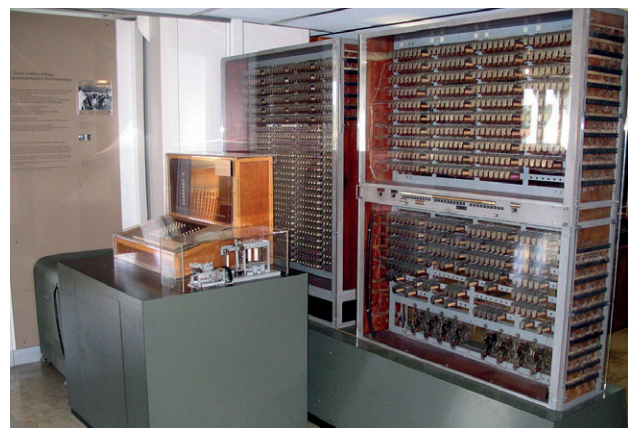
Tune in next issue for a heap of Raspberry Pi-powered projects to while away your rainy British summer holidays.

OLDE CODE

I saw that you plan to write about Konrad Zuse in a future issue. Great, I'm looking forward to that! Please don't forget to mention that there is an excellent permanent exhibition devoted to his work in the Deutsches Technikmuseum. Definitely worth a visit if you happen to go to Berlin. (Perhaps even a reason to go to Berlin in the first place.) You can read more about it here (<http://sdtb.de/Mathematics-and-Computer-Science.1256.0.html>)

Best regards,
Peder Christensen, Lund, Sweden

Andrew says: Thanks Peder! We knew that there was a replica of one of his machines in Munich, but the Berlin exhibition is news to us – we'll pop in the next time we're visiting the Free Software Foundation Europe. We'll be sure to mention it in issue 7, when we plan to write about him, his work on the Z3 machine and Plankalkül, the first high-level programming language.



There's a replica of Zuse's z3 machine at the Deutsches Museum in Munich. Image: Venusianer CC-BY-SA 3.0.

LICENCE QUESTION

I'm currently enjoying LV003 very much, but I've just come across the reviews section and I'd like to make a request: if you're going to review proprietary software in a free software magazine, can you please clearly label it?

I started reading the Bitwig Studio review and became suspicious, and while the price suggested to me that it was probably proprietary, it doesn't confirm it – free (libre) software can be sold (eg Ardour in the digital audio space takes a PWYC download approach; Red Hat's licensing; some mobile applications through the Google Play store, etc).

The simple solution would be to clearly include the software licence (not just price, which only implies the licence) in the DATA box at the start of reviews. This is what Wikipedia does on articles about software. Simply, Licence: GPLv3, or Apache v2, or proprietary, etc. That would make it very clear and obvious if a piece of software being reviewed is proprietary so that I can skip it, without having to switch to my computer to look it up to confirm.

This problem isn't exclusive to *Linux Voice*, but I'd hope that *Linux Voice* could do better! For example, in the Firefox add-ons repository, you have to dig under



Bitwig Studio, though a fantastic, Linux-native piece of software – is not Free Software.

the collapsed Version Information at the bottom of the page to find a link to the licence information. Similarly, Google Play and the Chrome Web Store clearly mark software as gratis, but IIRC doesn't indicate clearly if at all whether or not software is libre.

With a motto like "Free Software | Free Speech," I'd hope that *Linux Voice* could do better – if reviewing and recommending non-free software, at least clearly mark it as such so I know what to ignore! Otherwise... keep up the great work!

Blaise Alleyne

Graham says: That's a fair point. It's part of our remit to promote Free Software, so we should be doing better on that front. We'll add it to the data box as you suggest, starting with this issue. Otherwise... I'm glad you're enjoying it!

COMMAND LINE TOOLS

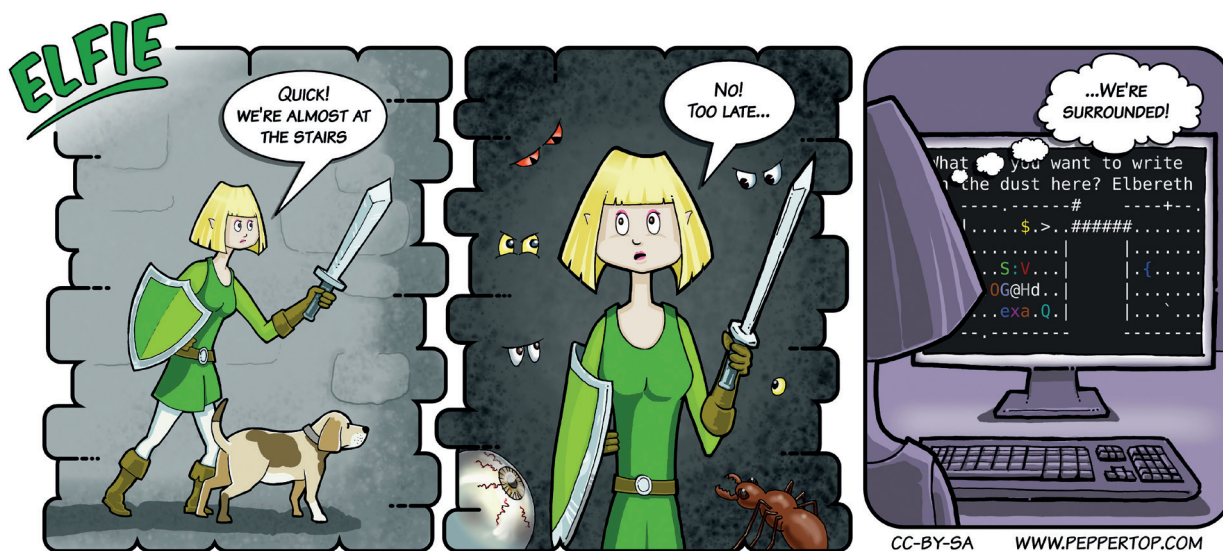
Love the new magazine and the feature on mastering the command line. I was surprised you omitted any mention of the spreadsheet tool **sc** (<http://ibiblio.org/pub/Linux/apps/financial/spreadsheet/sc-7.13.tar.gz>), which has been around on Unix-like systems for decades.

Tim Schofield

Mike says: True, SC is indeed a great command line spreadsheet. I'm getting ever closer to doing all my daily jobs at the shell prompt now. Next stop, apt-get autoremove x.org-server...



It's phenomenal what you can do with the Linux command line, especially when you factor in the time you save by automating repetitive tasks.



GIVE YOUR DATABASE AN INFORMATION IMPORT.



We'll share our knowledge to improve yours.

100% of our clients rate our PostgreSQL training courses as excellent. Book your place and gain access to unrivalled knowledge of the core code.

ENCRYPTION

A respected opponent of the Spycracy says we need a cheap box to encrypt all our connections with the internet.

In a recent article in the *Guardian*, Eben Moglen argues that we can't trust our governments, social networks or email providers to keep the spies out of our private affairs. The only solution is for all of us to use the best of modern technology to defeat the information thieves.

We need a simple cheap box that sits next to our phone socket and encrypts/decrypts all traffic to the internet. Our tech gurus could use their expertise to create a SpyBlocker device instead of wasting their time building yet another identikit smartphone.

So here's the challenge. The entrepreneur who markets the best box could make a fortune. We need to teach the NSA, CIA, GCHQ



Freedom isn't free: the Novena heirloom laptop cost \$5,000.

and their Chinese equivalents that we will no longer allow them to invade our lives and destroy our liberties.

Maurice George, Ormskirk, Lancashire

Andrew says: I agree that there's a goldmine to be made from customers who don't want to be spied on. But the crucial thing here is that the hardware would have to be open, like the Novena laptop (www.crowdsupply.com/kosagi/novena-open-laptop). Otherwise we'd be just as open to backdoors as before.

A LITTLE BIT OF MEXICO

For those of us who have to work mostly with Windows at work, but like to sneak the odd Linux box onto the network when we can, how about a tutorial on Samba 4 and how to set it up as an active directory domain controller or member server?

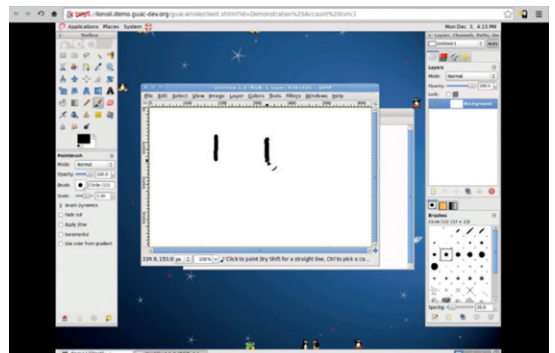
Also, I spotted the Guacamole remote desktop project <http://guac-dev.org>. It presents a remote desktop connection through any HTML 5 browser window and can proxy VNC and RDP connections too. It looks like a potentially very handy technology but maybe a bit

tricky to set up (it needs a Tomcat server back-end). Maybe one of the *Linux Voice* gurus could do the leg work for us and show us how to get it set up.

Nick

Andrew says: I remember all the fuss that was made when Samba 4 came out, because it was the first version to support Active Directory. Yes, you're quite right that we should cover it, and get it up on the internet as CC-BY-SA as soon as possible. As for Guacamole, it looks interesting. Hmm...

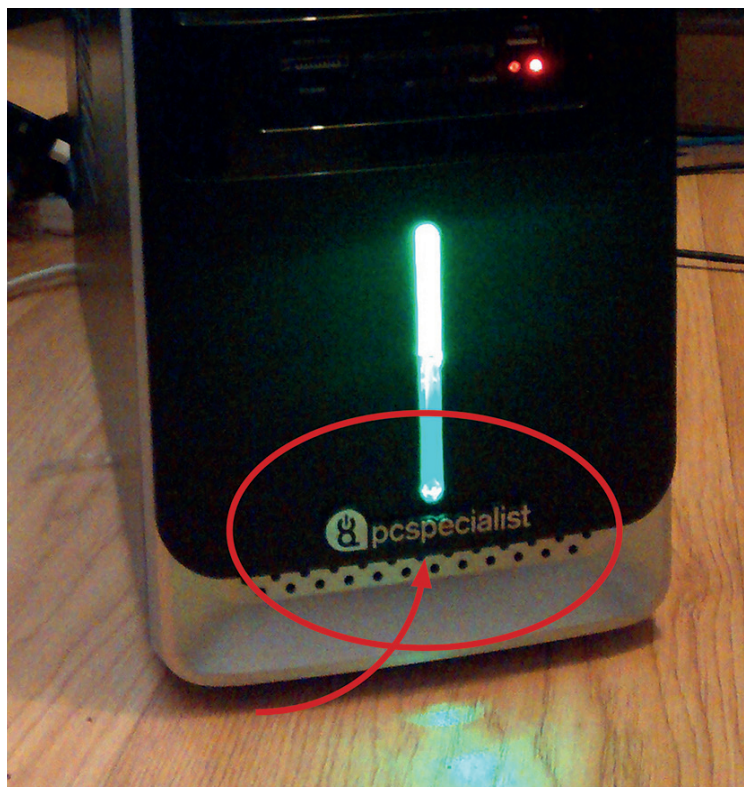
We haven't had the chance to test Guacamole, but that appears to be a Linux desktop running inside a browser. The cloud can now proclaim eternal victory!



BUYING LINUX MACHINES

I read with interest your article on buying Linux computers and I wish that I had access to it before I bought my recent machine, as it would've saved me a lot of my own research. However, I should like to point out that there are Linux PC vendors in Europe, and in particular I would draw your readers' attention to a German site; linux-onlineshop.de. I too had looked at US vendors, such as System76, and had concluded that VAT and import duties made this an unattractive proposition. The German site offered configurable modern machines and the protection of EU consumer legislation: much more attractive.

Unfortunately, the site is only available in German (no translation available) but my Secondary School German and judicious use of Google Translate where I really didn't understand the small print managed to secure an order and the machine arrived, well packaged, in eight days exactly as specified. Linux Onlineshop had installed Linux Mint for me and had even set up separate partitions for root and /home. Although I'm not a complete Linux novice, I didn't know enough about UEFI and Secure Boot at the time to consider installing it on a modern machine myself and it was useful to be able to buy a Haswell machine with Linux pre-installed. Even though I've since got to grips with installing with UEFI, I'm pleased that I dealt



If you begrudge paying Microsoft for an operating system that you're just going to delete, Check out www.pcspecialist.co.uk.

with [Linux-onlineshop](http://linux-onlineshop.de). They offer some good machines, ready to go, but buyers need to know that the power supply will have a European plug. This is easily cured with a UK visitor's adaptor, available from high-street camping shops or electronics retailers. I mention my experience for your readers, so that they might explore options that don't involve them paying 'the Windows tax'.

I'd like to thank you for the review of SolydXK in issue 2. I'd been looking for a solution to install on an old Intel Atom netbook for my nine-year-old niece. I installed SolydXK for her because it doesn't need re-installation and

she loves it because it has Scratch and Python and the desktop looks similar to the Raspberry Pi! Without your review I doubt that this distribution would have gained my attention.

Keep up the good work and I look forward to Issue 4!

Mike

Ben says: Yes! Thanks Mike. It's also worth taking a look at PC Specialist, a firm based right here in Ye Merry Englande. It's where I got my machine from, and as with linuxonlineshop.de, you don't have to pay for a pointless, useless Windows licence to get a machine that you're only ever going to use as a Linux box.

CONCERNED OF THE INTERNET

Is it true that Facebook is planning to buy Canonical? If so I will change distributions just for my privacy alone. <http://itsfoss.com/facebook-to-buy-ubuntu-for-3-billion>

Steve Cox

Nick 'Mouth of Sauron' Veitch says:

Canonical is not a listed company

– there are no public shares, so the only way for Canonical to be sold to anyone would be for a certain Mr Shuttleworth to sell it to them. Since he already bemonikers himself SABDFL (Self Appointed Benevolent Dictator For Life) it seems that the company would have to be wrestled from his cold, dead hands. However, if billions of currency are at stake, there

may be another way. With that kind of money, Facebook could possibly lure him onto some spacecraft claiming it was headed for the ISS. Once in orbit they could imprison him in one of the no-doubt dozens of brainwashing satellites they already have up there and compel him to name an upcoming release "Zazzy Zuckerburg". Still, this seems unlikely.