

# LINUX VOICE YOUR LETTERS



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

## LINUX VOICE STAR LETTER

### FIND OF THE FORTNIGHT

Thanks for the pointer to Tanglu [DistroHopper, LV008]. Even from the live DVD the KDE version was more responsive than I would expect on my Gateway LT4004u with Intel Atom N2600 CPU and 3600 Graphics Media Accelerator (GMA). It just booted and got down to business without needing any intervention from me. Other flavours of OS have been troublesome with this combination of CPU, GMA and Broadcom network interface.

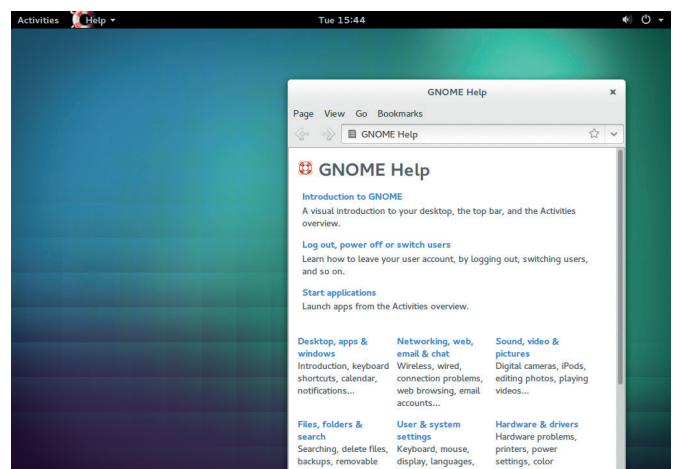
In the past, I have found KDE to be ponderously baroque despite being well-developed. The newer version of KDE delivered with Tanglu

looks good on the 10.1-inch LED 1024x600 display.

Installation to my netbook completed in about 30 minutes. Tanglu detected the netbook platform then configured the desktop for the KDE 4 netbook GUI.

System Monitor showed four threads consuming less than 20% of CPU capacity, indicating that Tanglu installed the Intel drivers for the GMA: SolydK failed in this area, resorted to software rendering of the graphics, producing a single-thread CPU load of around 70% capacity – SolydK took over two hours to install too

**Andrew Shead**



Debian, but with with graphical polish and a regular release cycle... sounds familiar... sounds like Ubuntu!

**Ben says:** I'm glad you like it! We see so many Debian/Ubuntu respins with minimal changes

made that it's refreshing to see a distro trying something authentically new.

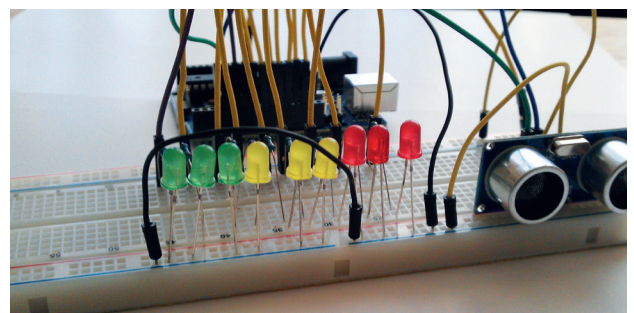
### WE FAIL

A couple of points. Your Arduino tutorial [in LV011] contained an error. The Arduino does not run the Processing language, although it's a commonly held misconception that it does. In fact "sketches" are written in C or C++ as is evident if you examine the code in the article. Processing is a language that runs on another computer and communicates using a serial protocol with an Arduino running a standard firmware "sketch" called Firmata. The following link makes this clear:

<http://playground.arduino.cc/Interfacing/Processing>

The use of Processing is entirely optional: for standalone projects where the Arduino is to run autonomously there is no choice other than to use a sketch written in C/C++.

Secondly I notice you regularly advocate DOSBox rather than DOSEMU for running DOS programs. The last time I looked at this – admittedly some years ago – it was evident that DOSBox was designed for games, reducing the effective CPU speed accordingly. DOSEMU runs DOS programs fast and is a program I use daily. Of course it's possible that DOSBox



now offers this capability, but it didn't when I tried it. It struck me as a case of horses for courses.

It's a great magazine and I've just renewed my subscription!

**Peter Hinch**

Wire stuff up, then write code to make cool things happen – that's the simple genius behind the Arduino.

## DRINKING

Congratulations on hitting the one year mark! I have gladly renewed my subscription. Any thoughts on allowing subscribers to set up an auto-renewing subscription? I have that set up with your former publication, and it is a very nice convenience.

And, great mugs! Yes, you all do look great in your photographs, but that's not what I'm talking about. I'm talking about the coffee/tea mug (do you even drink tea from a mug?). After having my letter featured in LV002, I had to have one. It looks better in person than it does on your website. I was a bit apprehensive about having a piece of ceramic shipped from overseas, but your shipping department did a fantastic job on the packaging. The form fitting styrofoam container took the trip over the pond in grand style, showing a bit of wear and tear, but protecting its precious cargo without fail. The ability to publish an outstanding magazine AND ship mugs unbroken internationally? What other skills are you hiding?

**Paul Olson, Oklahoma, USA**

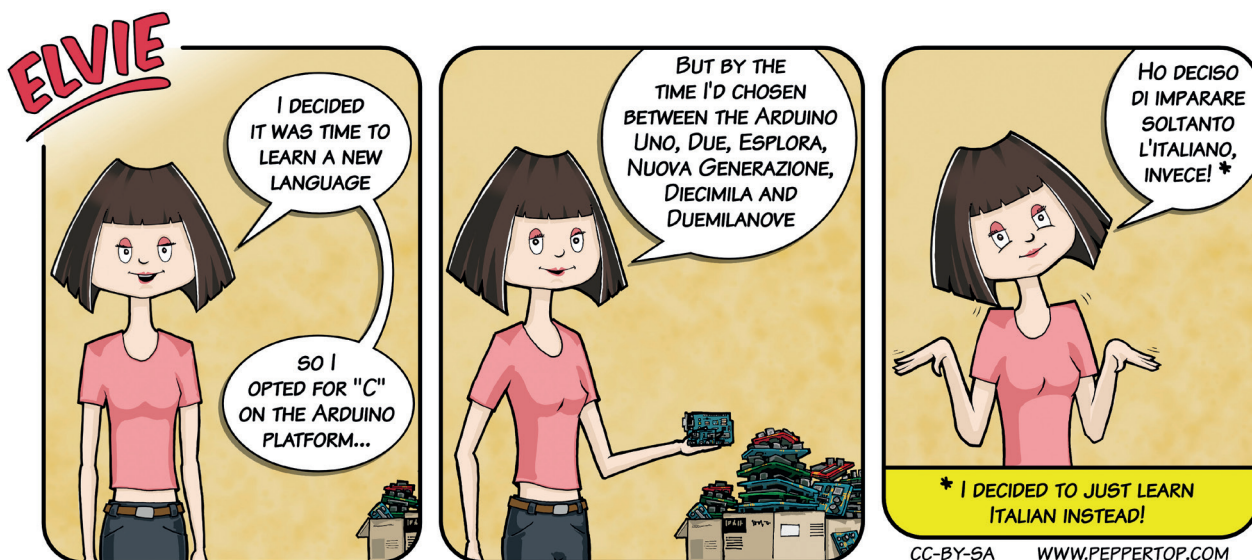
**Andrew says:** Thanks! We're all amazed by how quickly the year has gone by. It's funny you should mention this: we do have Direct Debit payments enabled for renewals now, and by the time you read this we



should have got it running for new subscriptions as well. At first we could only take payments via PayPal, but we're incrementally improving things (incrementally because if anything went wrong it would be up to Ben to fix it, so we're only adding options

one at a time). On the mug question: I drink tea from a 50-year-old pint mug that Mike brought me back from Germany. Hidden talents: Graham plays the piano. Mike can juggle. Ben was Worcestershire under-10s freestyle wrestling champion.

Americans! Thanks to Graham's packing skills, your mug will reach the shores of liberty whole and unbroken – <http://shop.linuxvoice.com/product/linux-voice-mug>.





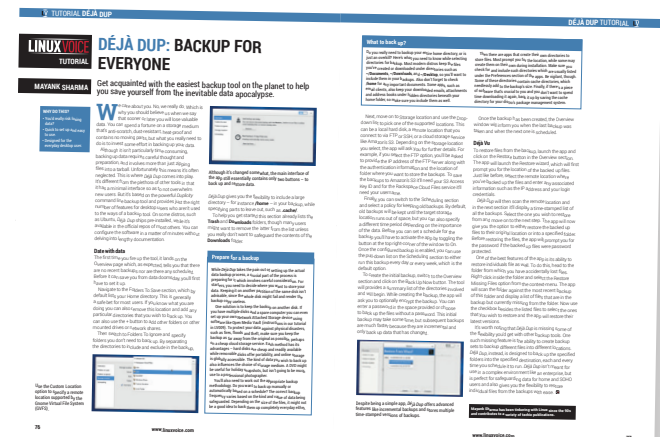
## DISTRO HOPPER

As you might expect when one distro hops, backing up one's data is important. But I had an issue when using *Déjà Dup* [featured in our tutorial section, LV011], after I tried to restore my data. Whilst I can't fully remember the sequence of events now, I think my problem of NOT being able to restore my data was linked to either a change in my computer's host name or a change in which DNS service I used. Anyway, a host name change was my problem and since *Déjà Dup* didn't allow me to specify the host name or even indicate which host name it was using I decided to write my own *Bash* script and using *rsync* do my own backup! It may

be that my own script isn't the most efficient at backing up but I know I can restore my stuff. I sometimes wonder when apps are recommended whether the person recommending them have actually used them enough to hit such problems.

**G White**

**Andrew says:** I'm pretty sure Mayank, who wrote the *Déjà Dup* tutorial last issue, has been using it for a while now, and his two-page tutorial was more than enough to get new users introduced to it (rather than being an exhaustive look at corner cases – but in this case your best bet would be your distro's forums). On a more



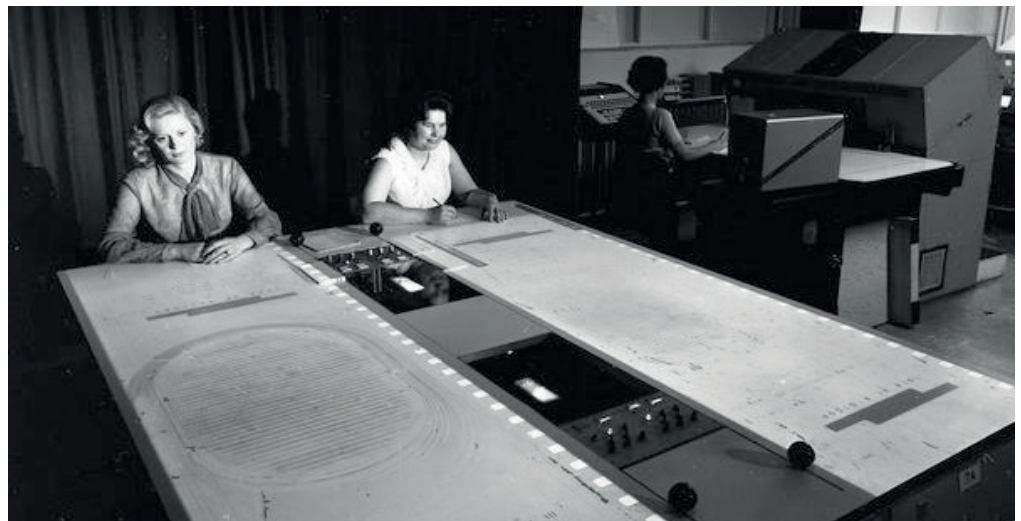
profound note, I take my hat off to you for writing your own script! Hackability – that's the key. When the existing solutions don't work for whatever reason, free software gives us the ability to make our own – that's why we like it so much.

*Déjà Dup* is an easy way to perform regular backups – if you aren't backing up already, try it out.

## I'M HISTORY!

I have been picking up your magazine since I saw a copy of issue 3 on one of my irregular visits to WHS. I like the mix of articles and tutorials. With my advancing years I look at the coverage you give to older systems and there, on page 99 of issue 10 was the computer room at the Atlas Computer Lab where I worked showing Doug House, Tony Sargent and, I think, Ros Haliwell on the tape decks. I actually missed working on the Atlas as it shut down before I joined the lab in 1976 as a ICL shift engineer on the 1906a mainframe. The Atlas Processor was still there, but was being de-commissioned. An urban myth at the time was that on one occasion some circuit boards were removed, allegedly for an Atlas still working "Somewhere Underground".

My Atlas claim to fame is that in 1978 I was asked by the ICL engineer in charge, Ted Everson, to build a 12-volt power supply so that the Atlas console could be on display at the building Reception Desk with some lights on, so I was pleased to see in your article that the console has been "re-discovered and is back on display".



I was also at the Lab, latterly renamed "Rutherford Atlas Lab" when a Cray 1 was shipped in, for temporary storage for the UK Meteorological Office at Bracknell. A very impressive piece of hardware, complete with Freon cooling system.

My wife has a history even older as she was a systems analyst working on LEO computers in the 1960s.

After 37 years as an engineer, I am now back at college studying HND computer science, not a sniff of Linux, all Microsoft, Adobe, Access, C#, Visual Basic and Oracle, just a tiny hint of *MySQL*,

all this in a college five miles from the Sony factory making the Raspberry Pi. It makes you weep sometimes.

**Gordon Ireson, South Wales**

**Graham Says:** Wow! Thanks for sharing that with us! We're incredibly lucky that the history of our field is so accessible – even if you start with single-application analogue machines with valves rather than programmable digital computers, computer science is still young enough that most of us can comprehend the timeline without having to bend our heads too much. And don't worry about the HND – the world will catch up with Linux one day.

To have worked on a piece of the UK's computing history such as Atlas must be a great privilege.