

My Linux Experiences

Every once in a while, I look back fondly on the “good old days,” also known as the nineties, when I exclusively used Amigas for the most part. Over the last several years, I have graduated (more like sidestepped) from “Amiga user” to “AmigaMorphOS user” to “Amiga, Morph, and Mac user” to “Anything that isn’t Windows user” in the name of protecting myself against the future, though I can’t say that progress has really made anything better for me. As I mentioned in last month’s column, the newest system around here is a Lenovo laptop, on which I have been trying out Linux in various forms. Since I don’t do a lot of traveling, I didn’t see that much reason to have a laptop, but I will admit the ability to surf the net from anywhere in the house is quite convenient. I still need to get a carrying case for the thing though, so I’m not feeling like I’m toting around a hard plastic baby when taking it out of the house.

Linux, in all its myriad flavors, has gone on a long journey from being a system no one but programmers and masochists would dare touch, to one that most people could make use of, especially if they’re used to using Windows. For me, who was the “AmigaMorph/Mac” guy up to now, Linux is a bit of an ordeal, especially when it comes to laptops. The main issue has been getting the operating system to recognize and use the hardware in a satisfactory way. So far the main issues I’ve had are with the wireless network support, which has been inconsistent at best, and

unusable at worst, and getting more direct support (including OpenGL) for the video hardware. I’ve tried several “Live CDs” of different Linux versions, and so far my favorite Linux form has been the lightweight Puppy, which is very easy on memory and disk space, comparably to AmigaOS. I’ve also had the best wireless luck with Puppy, as I can get it working if I’m persistent enough, though I still need to figure out how to get it to work without me having to set it up again on every bootup. Other forms of Linux I’ve tried, including DSL, 3 kinds of Ubuntu, and PCLinuxOS, all refuse to connect wirelessly at all. I think they may be making wrong assumptions about the Lenovo’s hardware. I haven’t had any luck getting 3D acceleration going on Puppy yet, though I haven’t gotten it working on any other Linux either, with the possible exception of Ubuntu. After the amount of experience I’ve had with various types of Linux over the last month-plus, I’ve come to the conclusion that it is probably quite good for most day-to-day computer and Internet usage, if you can stand banging your head against it long enough to get everything set up to run the way you want it to.

Back to the subject of the closer relatives to the Amiga, there has been a lot of buzz about getting them running on other Power PC hardware, namely Macs. There’s been talk of leaked software which made it (theoretically) possible to run Amiga OS4 on PPC Mac hardware, something which neither Hyperion nor Amiga Inc. appears to support. Also video has been shown of MorphOS 2.0, which has been “coming soon” for the last three hundred years, running on a Mac Mini

of similar spec to my own. Message board chatter seems to imply the Morph team are more than happy to see MOS running on Macs. Personally, I see this all as an opportunity. As Apple keeps marching forward, more and more PPC-based are left behind (already my Mac Mini is not supported by parts of iLife ‘08 and some other software), so who knows how long it will be before the non-Intel Mac hardware is abandoned altogether, just as the PPC supplanted the 68000-series Macs years back. In any case, there are several older Macs out there that are powerful, yet obsolete or nearly so in the eyes of Apple. Running MorphOS or AmigaOS on these systems gives them further life and variety, much the way lightweight Linux and similar setups extend the life of older PC hardware, and gives Hyperion and the Morph team the opportunity to sell to a wider base. This all might even inject some new blood into the Amiga family community, but one step at a time. There is a distinct downside though. To give an example, I’ve long been thinking of getting an Efika system from Genesi, for the main purpose of having a smaller, more portable system to display MorphOS-related stuff at meetings and the like. If it’s possible to run MorphOS on it, I would be more likely to scout out a PPC Mac laptop, as that would be more portable, more powerful (than an Efika, and maybe more than anything which has run AmigaOS4 or MorphOS thus far), and better suited to my intentions. It could cut into potential sales of new hardware for Amiga-family stuff, but that’s been a sector that’s somewhere between dead and geared to other markets for years now. Regardless, I’m back to waiting and seeing what the future will bring –

if my Mac Mini will be ditched by Apple only to become a new Amiga or Morph machine – if I'll be buying new old hardware for the sole purpose of giving it an old new operating system – and whether or not I'll still have the Linux and Mac (or even -blech- Windows) machines frustrating me for the sake of being future-proof.

...by Eric Schwartz
from the AmiTech-Dayton Gazette, February 2008

Electron Filmed in Motion

Feb. 25, 2008

Scientists have filmed an electron in motion for the first

time, using a new technique that will allow researchers to study the tiny particle's movements directly.

Previously it was impossible to photograph electrons because of their extreme speediness, so scientists had to rely on more indirect methods. These methods could only measure the effect of an electron's movement, whereas the new technique can capture the entire event.

Extremely short flashes of light are necessary to capture an electron in motion. A technology developed within the last few years can generate short pulses of intense laser light, called attosecond pulses, to get the job done.

"It takes about 150 attoseconds for an electron to circle the nucleus of an atom. An attosecond is 10⁻¹⁸ seconds long, or, expressed in another way: an attosecond is related to a

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April Calendar

April 9 — Amiga By-The-Loop Chapter
7:00 pm — **South Grand Prairie Public Library**
760 Bardin Road, Grand Prairie
Note: Wednesday meeting at
South GP Library

April 9— MCCC Board of Director's Meeting
Approx. 9:15 pm — Location TBD

April 26 — Newsletter Deadline — 7:00 am

second as a second is related to the age of the universe," said Johan Mauritsson of Lund University in Sweden.

Using another laser, scientists can guide the motion of the electron to capture a collision between an electron and an atom on film. The length of the film Mauritsson and his colleagues made corresponds to a single oscillation of a wave of light. The speed of the event has been slowed down for human eyes. The results are detailed in the latest issue of the journal Physical Review Letters.

Mauritsson says the technique could also be used to study what happens in an atom when an electron leaves its shell.