

The *Nixed Report

Issue 06

Unix and Overlooked Pop Culture

November 2013

Special Halloween Edition



netrunner
The Linux Desktop Distribution

Reconnecting With My Inner Geek and Reviewing Netrunner OS

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Newly Acquired System: Toshiba Tecra M9
(P. 3)

Yet another computer is acquired via E-Bay. Buying an AS-IS system has its moments, but they are far from boring.



Unix



Distro Journey: Netrunner OS (P. 4)

Based on Ubuntu, this OS is also sponsored by the same company that's supporting Kubuntu and Linux Mint KDE Edition.

Overlooked Pop Culture

Reconnecting With My Inner Geek (P. 12)

A student organization that I was a part of has improved since I graduated in 2011. With new members and a new name, the Animation Expression Society has become a haven for fans of anime and nerdism. I participated in the UCM Homecoming Parade and attended the group's Halloween Party.



Newly Acquired System: Toshiba Tecra M9-S5515X

By Thomas Holbrook II

While traveling along on the Distro Journey of 2013, I came to realize that the hardware I had was varied, but lacked Nvidia hardware. I decided to change that by purchasing some items on E-Bay.

One of them is the system pictured on the right. Originally meant for the enterprise environment, the Toshiba Tecra M9's build has the sturdy industrial look. I had to purchase a hard drive (along with caddy), power adapter, and a new battery separately, but I still wound up paying less than \$200 USD.



The specs are as follows:

- Intel Core 2 Duo (2.4 GHz)
- 2 GB of RAM
- DVD burner
- 120 GB Hard Drive (purchased separately)
- Nvidia Quadro NVS 130m with 128 MB of RAM (TurboCache)
- Firewire Port
- Three USB ports
- Ethernet and Wireless

At the moment, it seems that newer Linux kernels have a hard time with the GPU. Ubuntu 13.10 was not very stable and would lock up after attempting to install the Nvidia drivers. Using Linux Mint 13 Mate Edition was more feasible, especially after setting the noapic option as well as disabling ACPI and Kernel Mode Setting.

Until it can be determined otherwise, the system will be ultra experimental only and will not be included in the 2013 Distro Journey series. After all, if it turns out that the hardware was unstable the whole time due to age, wear, and tear, the review of various operating systems will be tainted.

In either event, experimentation should prove to be interesting.

Do you have pictures of old school computers, electronics, and more that you want to share? Send all pictures in JPG or PNG to thomash@thenixedreport.com with *dot slash submission* in the subject line. Be sure to have a brief description of the photo and where it was taken. You must have the rights to said photo and give The *Nixed Report rights to re-use it. Other than that, you retain the rights to your work.

By Thomas Holbrook II

The following systems were used to evaluate this distro (upgrades marked in bold):

ZaReason Breeze 3110

- 1.6 GHz Intel Atom CPU
- 1 GB RAM
- 320 GB Hard Drive
- DVD-ROM Drive
- Intel GMA 950 Graphics
- Interface: KDE



Toshiba Satellite L305-S5921

- Dual Core Pentium T3400 (Max Speed: 2.16 GHz)
- 2 GB RAM
- Intel GMA X4500 Graphics (mobile version)
- 120 GB Hard Drive
- DVD burner
- 1280x800 LCD Display
- Multimedia buttons
- Atheros Wireless adapter
- Ethernet controller
- VGA Port
- 3 USB Ports
- Interface: KDE

Acer Aspire One 722 (USB DVD-ROM used for installation)

- Dual-Core AMD C60 (Max Speed: 1.33 GHz)
- AMD Radeon HD 6250 Graphics
- 2 GB RAM
- 320 GB Hard Drive
- Ethernet
- Atheros Wireless Adapter
- LCD with 1366x768 resolution and integrated webcam.
- Interface: KDE

Intel Desktop

- Intel D946GZIS Motherboard
- Intel Core 2 6300 CPU at 1.83 GHz
- 1 GB DDR-2 PC-5300 RAM
- 80 GB Hard Drive
- DVD/CD-RW Combo Drive
- Intel GMA 3000 Graphics
- **Upgraded Graphics to an EVGA Nvidia Geforce 210 (1 GB RAM)**
- Intel Audio
- Ethernet
- Interface: KDE

HP Pavilion Elite 410y

- AMD Phenom II X6 1045T (Max Speed: 3.2 GHz)
- 8 GB RAM
- AMD Radeon HD5570 with 1 GB RAM
- 1 Terabyte Hard Drive
- Ethernet
- Wireless adapter (not used)
- Interface: KDE

Introduction

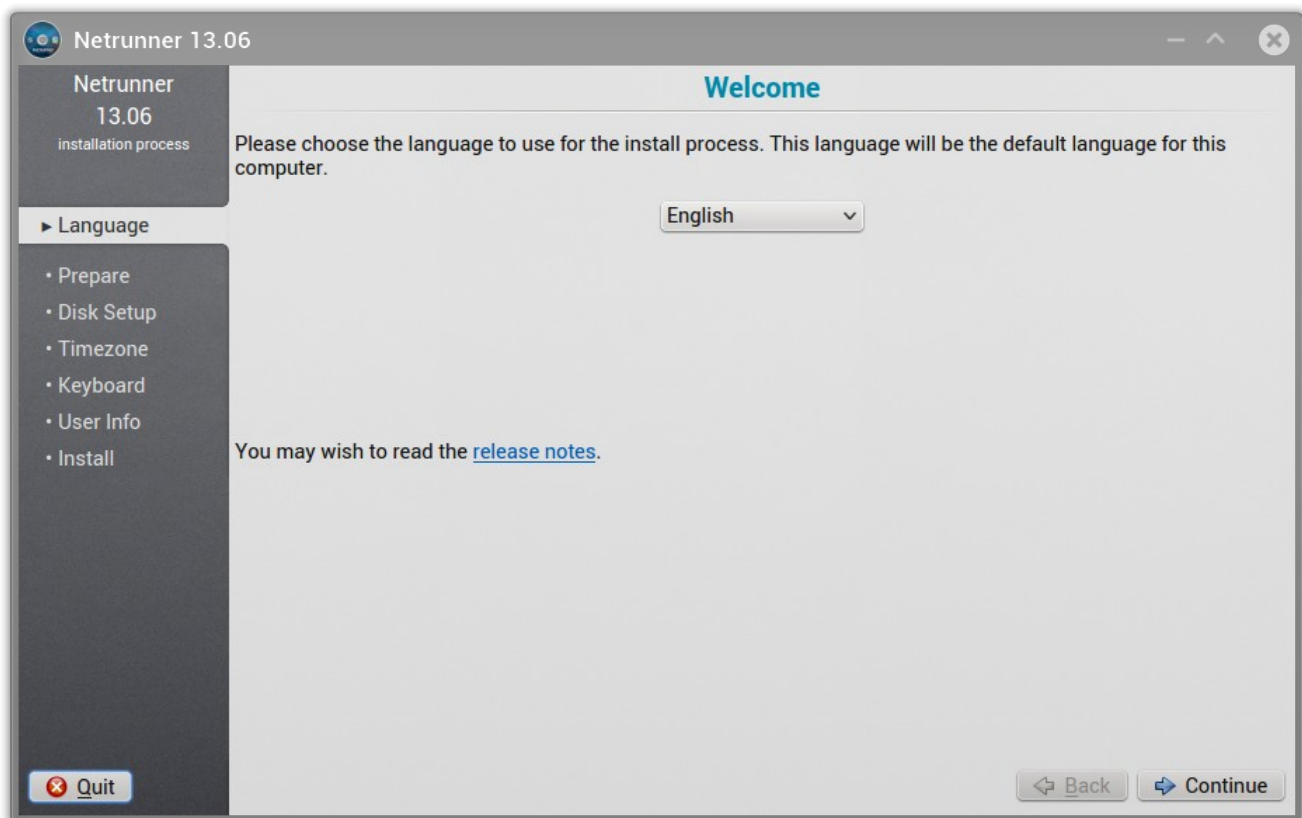
This operating system is brought to us by Blue Systems, a German company that sponsors Kubuntu and Linux Mint KDE Edition. They also sponsor various KDE-based projects and is a KDE Patron. The interesting thing about the company in question is that finding out more about it was a challenge.

An entry on Wikipedia does shed some light on the company, but there's a lack of source citations. Nevertheless, according to [Wikipedia](#), Blue Systems is a German-based IT company. They currently employ developers who work on KDE full time.

In short, their business is to support the development of free and open source software (FOSS). Major projects that they're involved in include:

- KDE Homerun
- KDE Folderview
- Firefox KDE
- Muon Discover
- Aurorae 3 for KWin.
- rekonq (Web browser that uses Webkit as the rendering engine)
- kde-gtk-config (to maintain a consistent look and feel between KDE and gtk-based apps)
- kcm webaccounts
- kcm samba-mounter

Installation



Since Netrunner OS is based on Ubuntu, the familiar Ubiquity is used for installation. Nearly 8.5 GB of hard drive space is needed and an Internet connection is recommended. Disk setup allows for users to dual-boot if they have Windows installed, removing Windows and using the entire disk, or other options for more advanced users.

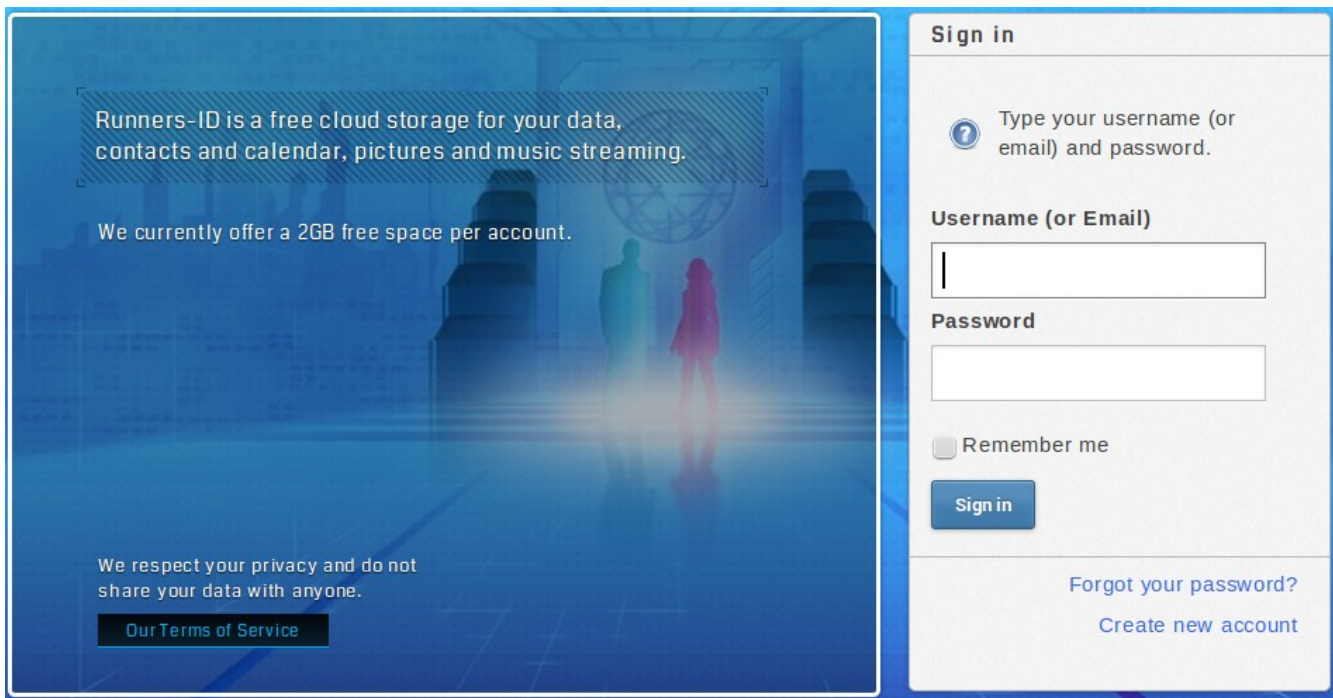
While the hard drive partitions are being set and formatted, the user can then set the time zone, choose their preferred keyboard layout, and enter a username and password for logging in after the installation completes. To kill more time, a slide show about Netrunner OS illustrates the highlights of the system.

Once installation is complete, the user is instructed to reboot their machine.

The Interface

KDE 4.10.5 is the interface of choice. One of the interesting choices is having an emphasis on web apps. Using a traditional menu (as opposed to the Kickoff Menu), various menu entries that utilize various websites in single window mode are organized in the Web-Apps submenu.

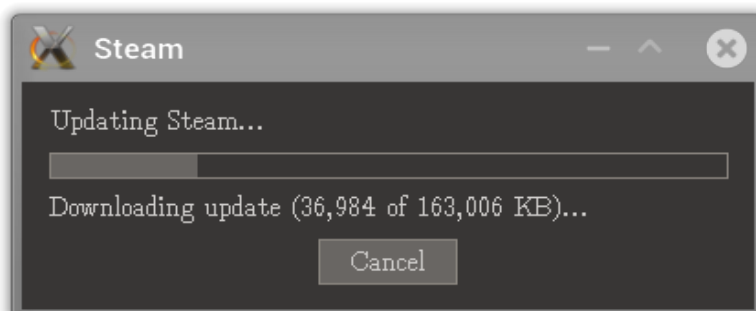
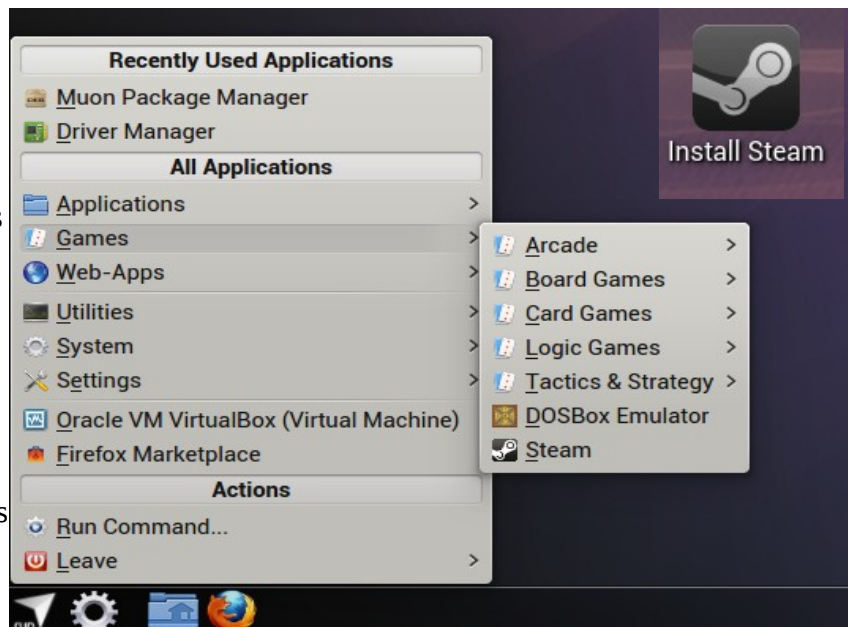
Though I never really utilized them, I was intrigued with Runners-ID. Each user is offered 2 GB of free space.



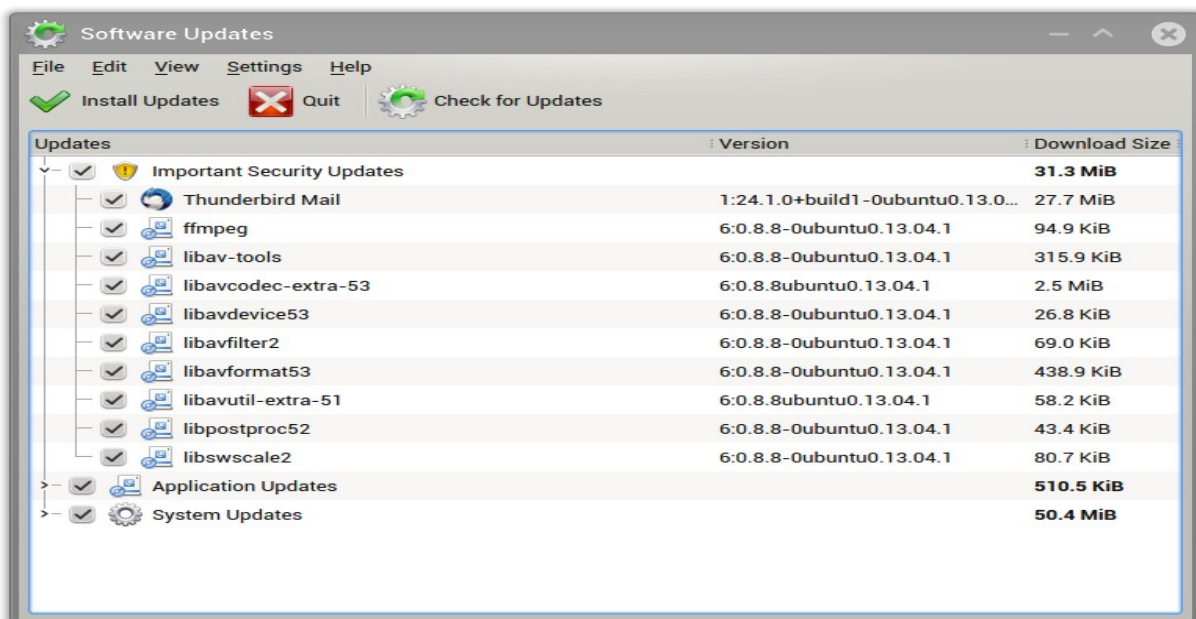
A shortcut to install Steam is on the desktop for anyone who uses that gaming platform, which is definitely a time saver.

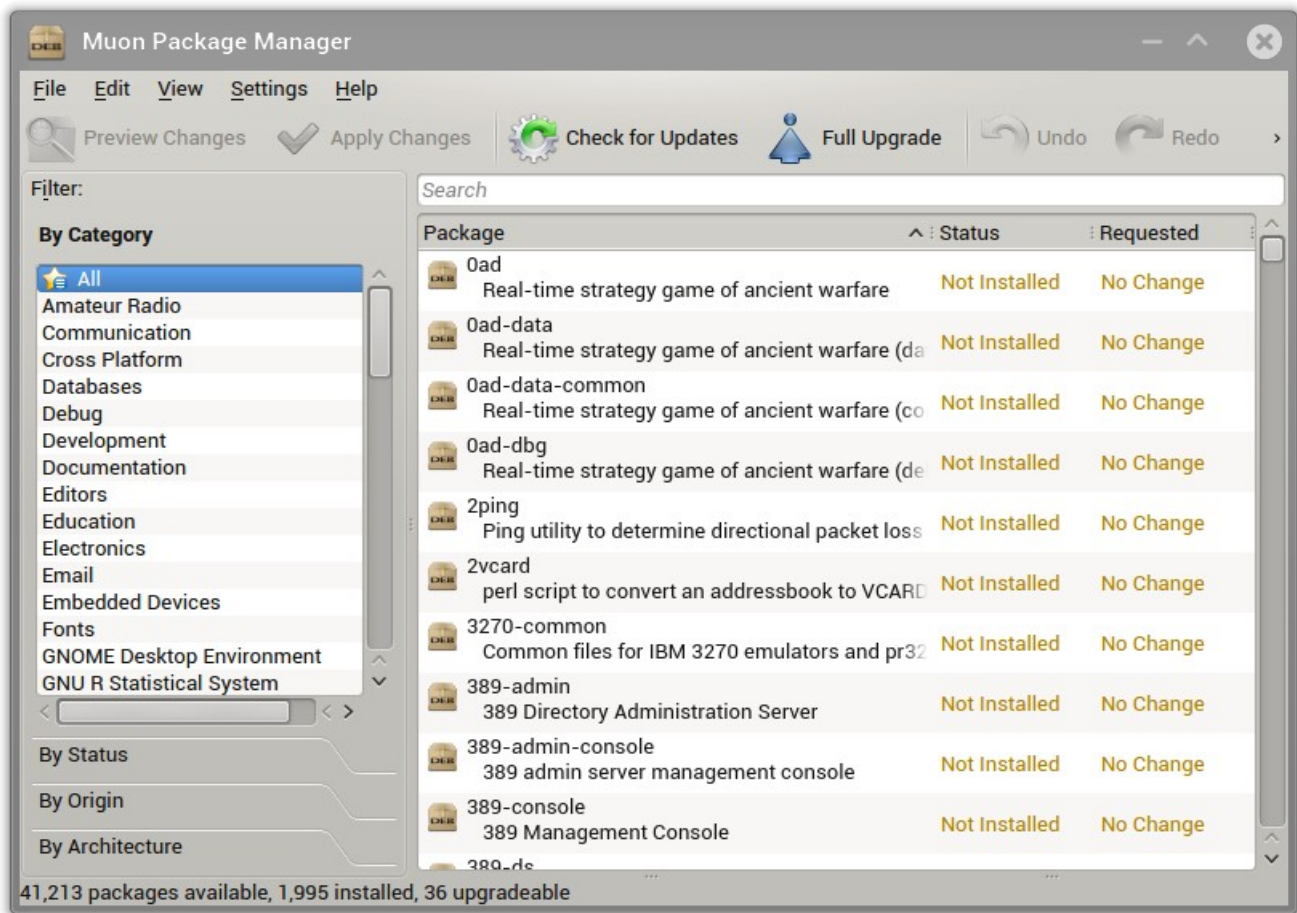
Double clicking the icon on the desktop (picture on the right) initiates a single window instance of Firefox that manually downloads a Debian package. After installing the package, a desktop shortcut replaces the previous shortcut and a menu entry shows up under games.

When ran for the first time, the user is introduced to the Install Agreement which outlines the terms of use of the service. After agreeing to the terms, the rest of the client is downloaded.



Besides gaming, the system is effective for general computing at home or in a business environment. A good mixture of applications allows for users to be productive almost right away. Instead of the Ubuntu Software Center, Muon Discover is used for the purpose of installing applications while Muon Update Manager is for updates.

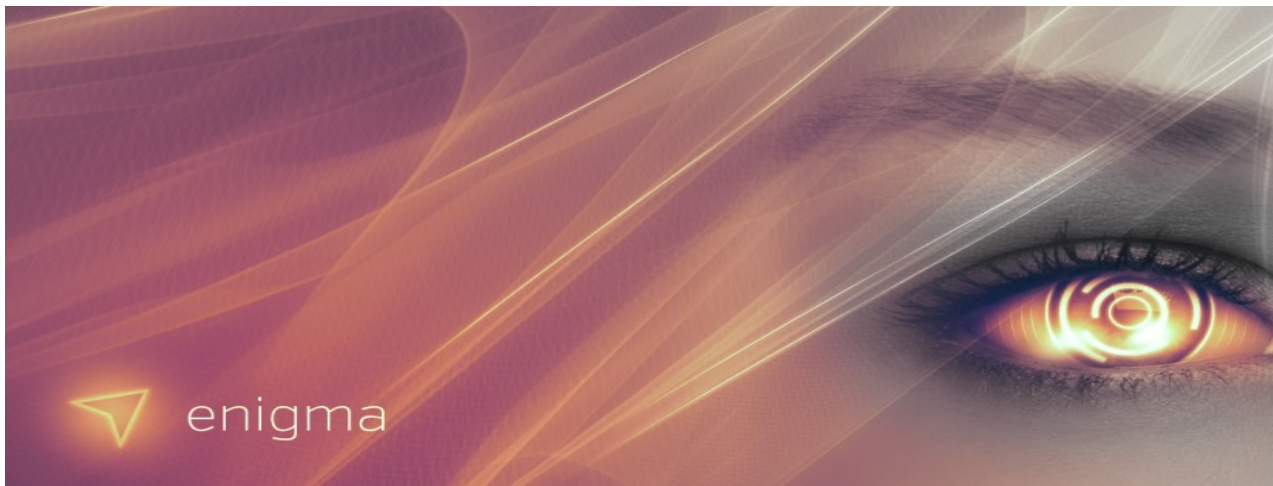




For power users wanting more options, Muon Package Manager can be used to install multiple applications at once as well as obtain system updates. The system was designed for newcomers while getting out of the way of more advanced users.

What I Liked

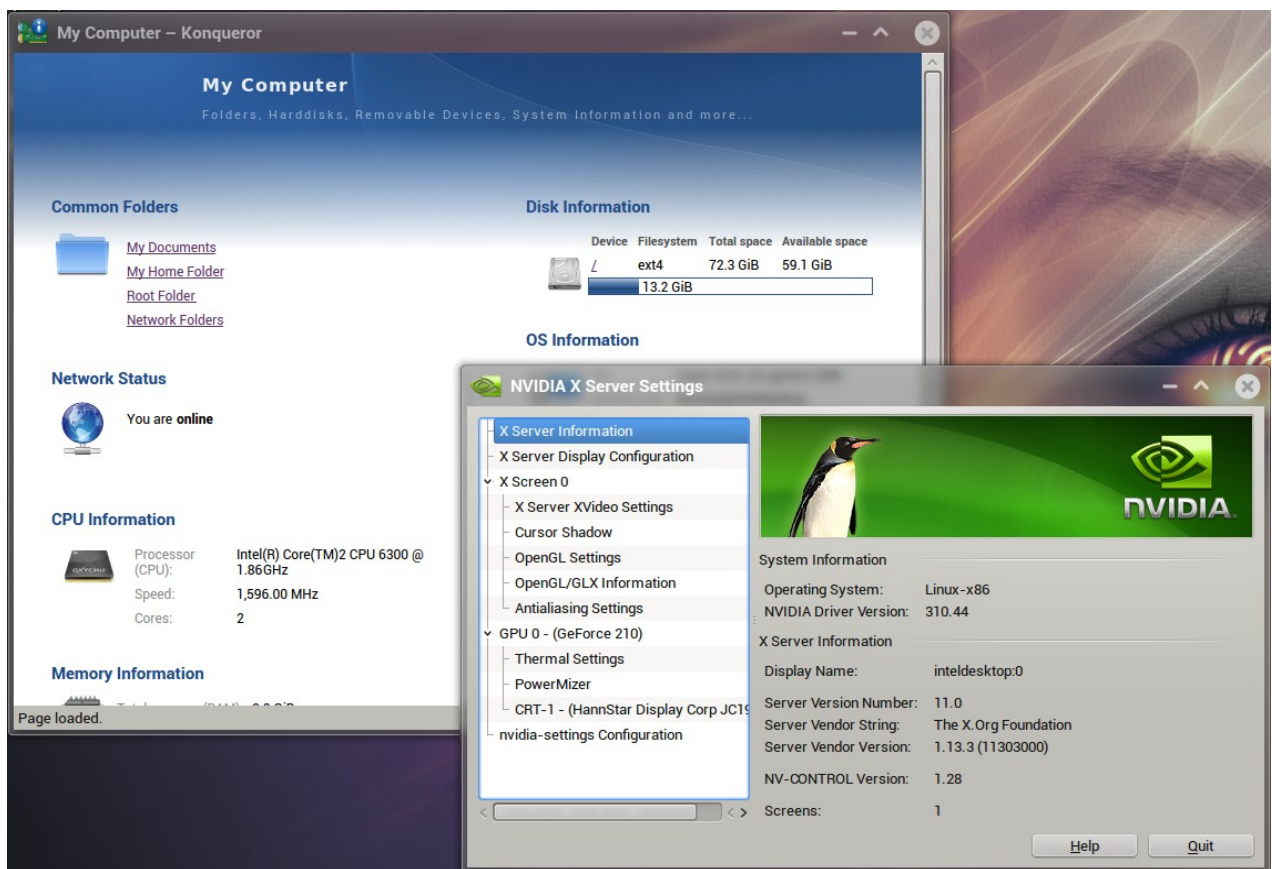
For starters, the wallpaper is absolutely beautiful. Enigma is an appropriate code name for this version.



The idea of Runners-ID offering 2 GB of free online storage is a nice touch. Though I never experimented with the streaming music feature, I can see how such a feature would come in handy. The cloud service itself utilizes OwnCloud.

The version of KDE has web accounts as a feature, which allows for integration of Facebook, Google, Runners-ID, and OwnCloud with the system. When integrating a Runners-ID account, a link to the online storage service is provided via Webdav in the Dolphin file manager. Speaking of KDE, optimization to Kwin allows for special effects, even on the Breeze 3110.

When adding new hardware to the Intel Desktop, the system adapted accordingly. Using the Driver Manager, the Nvidia drivers were successfully installed for the GeForce 210.



What Could Be Better

Runners-ID needs improvement on a couple of fronts. For starters, the cloud service could use some improvement in terms of responsiveness. Some lag is to be expected to the nature of bandwidth and the Internet in general, so a minor amount is understandable. However, too much lag may discourage use of the service.

The other front in which Runners-ID needs work is supporting the service financially. The 2 GB of online storage is nice, but what if a user wants more space? Why is there no option to buy more space?

Not having an option to do so is causing Blue Systems to miss out on additional revenue that could be used to sustain the company while supporting FOSS development.

Speaking of finances, the Netrunner OS site has no options for donating money to the project itself. I have encountered comments suggesting just that option. The good news is that there are plans to incorporate it in the future.

Conversation started October 10



Thomas Holbrook II

10/10, 1:09pm

Your site mentions donations as a way to help out. However, I can't find a donation link anywhere on your site. Is there any way to donate money to the project?



Netrunner | KDE GNU/Linux Distribution

10/10, 2:03pm

Hello Thomas,
thanks for wanting to help us with a donation!
We are working on setting up a donation possibility, it will likely be ready soon. Just check our frontpage and you'll see when it pops up. Right now, we are preparing the next release, which will feature quite some new items, like a completely new startmenu called "Kicker" and a windows-7 like Taskbar, that allows to expand Launchers on their position.

Conclusion

Netrunner OS 13.06 “Enigma” is an excellent release to performs well and has a balanced mix of applications that allow for productivity right off the bat. The balance between newbie friendly and power user friendly allows for the system to have a wide audience. The theme is beautiful and the wallpaper is breath taking.

If there was a way for the project to accept money and for Runners-ID to be improved in terms of speed, responsiveness, and allowing users to upgrade their storage, then the OS would become even more viable as a contender against the likes of Ubuntu, Red Hat Enterprise, and SuSE Linux Enterprise.

Websites

<http://www.netrunner-os.com>

Next Stop on the Journey

A detour from the Linux kernel will take place via Oracle Solaris 11.1.

Reconnecting With My Inner Geek

By Thomas Holbrook II



Last issue, I talked about reflecting on the past while looking towards the future. The retrospective continues with the reconnection to an organization that I was a part of during my college years. It started out as the CMSU Anime Club, and is now known as the UCM Animation Expression Society. This student group was the reason I was able to burst out of my shell.

Like most student groups, it's gone through highs and lows but has survived for over a decade. This year, I decided to participate in the UCM Homecoming Parade with the organization. As it turns out, AES also allied itself with Queers and Allies, an LGBT advocacy group.

I arrived at the designated spot before 9 AM on Saturday, October 26, 2013. The two groups were working together to put their float together. The theme placed an emphasis on expression and the making of memories.

I road on the float during the first half of the parade and walked beside the float for the remainder of the event.

Photos of the event are on the next page.



Team Rocket!



Float setup.



Attaching the Polaroid Frames.



It was a chilly morning.



Zombie and Vampires. Oh my!



More cosplayers joined the fray.

The parade was fun, especially when the theme for Super Mario Brothers began playing on the float's speaker system. At the end of the event, I made the decision to not only attend the next AES meeting, but their Halloween party as well.



Original character.



Cautious Amber.



Van Helsing!



The sword is drawn!



He lost his eye!



Hey! It's The Dude!!!!

I'm so proud of the UCM AES for growing as an organization. I'm confident that they'll continue to grow and sustain themselves for future generations. Way to go!