

## LinuxWorld Conference &amp; Expo

# (In)credible Linux

LinuxWorld Conference & Expo NY 2004 was as much about new chapter beginnings as it was about old chapter endings. LinuxWorld has been trend "suit" since Eric S. Raymond's Cathedral & the Bazaar went hardcover. **BY SAM HISER**

**T**he theme was 'Linux for business / Linux by business.' LWE-NY 2004 will go down in history as Desktop Linux's quiet debut.

I estimate over 20,000 attendees came to the Expo. New Yorkers will be happy that festivities next year move to Boston's Haynes Convention Center; it's easier to get to, and probably warmer.

## Novell

Novell made good impressions: CEO, Jack Messman, gave a Keynote speech: "Novell will give back more than it receives from Open Source!"

Nat Friedman and Miguel de Icaza were present for Ximian (now Novell Ximian Services). Their work is to bring Novell a desktop better than the nice one they designed for Sun.

Suse maintained an independent area next to Novell's. The crowds were indicative of Suse's potential to steal Red Hat's leadership of the American market.

## Oracle

Oracle had a dominant visual presence: a giant white igloo promising shelter and warmth - with information inside. The igloo stood out with messages leaning toward next-gen computing: "Grid" and "What Comes After Unbreakable Linux?"

Regardless of what you know about Oracle, their years of running the words "Unbreakable Linux" in a strong font on the back cover of *The Economist* magazine has helped us all.

## Sun Microsystems

Sun led with its new Java Desktop System. JDS is now the #1 Linux distro in the world, and rightly so. This is the most attractive, clean and well-integrated Linux distro for everyday business and even individual use. Sun will bring out a version of JDS for Solaris, along



Figure 1: Linux is growing up.

with the Java Enterprise System on Solaris, later this year; and they may be working on a version of JDS for delivery over their Sun Ray thin-client system.

## Java as Subtext

Java people and Linux people are a bit like oil and water: they'll mix, but only if shaken. Java was represented by Sun, IBM's WebSphere and Beasoft's WebLogic.

## Desktop Linux

JDS, Desktop Linux Consortium, OpenOffice.org, Linux Terminal Server Project, Freedesktop.org and GNOME Foundation are all a part of the Desktop community.

Only this year has a major player, Sun, come

out with a desktop that is backed by the confidence of size, innovation and a corporate sales channel. Enterprise customers must now acknowledge that there's a Linux desktop to consider.

The theme is muted because HP and IBM have not produced a Linux desktop.

## Below the Radar

The rendering advances evident in GNOME 2.4, fontconfig and Cairo (the next-gen windowing system), are just a few examples of contributions by which Linux will leap ahead of other platforms in the next 18 months.

Havoc Pennington and Jim Gettys, two of the key leaders in Freedesktop.org and Fedora Project were not manning booths, but giving talks in the Conference space. These projects will change the perceptions and realities of Linux irreversibly.

## Concluding Thoughts

Linux's attraction today is unmistakable. It's because their customers are asking more Linux questions. The feeling at LinuxWorld this year reflects how urgently the suits are looking to Linux.

Next year's LinuxWorld offers a commute to Boston. See you there! ■



Figure 2: LTSP: Saving the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Worlds.