



Ubuntu as an emerging gaming platform

GAME ON!

What does it mean for Ubuntu when big-name game publishers start porting their products? **BY JONO BACON**

For the gamers among you, this news is exciting because you will be able to get many of your favorite games natively on Ubuntu, but there are some other, more subtle benefits, too.

Gaming is an intense, volume-driven business, which means that publishers must be confident there will be a return on their investment before porting a game to a new platform. In the gaming industry, bringing a game to a new platform involves a lot of investment, not just in engineering, but also in terms of support (e.g., retraining your support staff), marketing, and so on. Studios and publishers, such as Valve and EA, being interested in Ubuntu as a platform speaks volumes about the opportunities they see in the distribution.

Another benefit of having these companies involved with Ubuntu is that brings a whole new level of focus to our technology. Since Valve's announcement, we have already seen Valve working with graphics cards manufacturers to improve driver quality, and we have seen positive reports on the quality of big chunks of our subsystem. For example, shortly after Valve's announcement about bringing Steam to Ubuntu, the company reported that *Left 4 Dead* was already running faster in Ubuntu than on Windows.

These technology improvements also have a ripple effect. Big fish like Valve bringing their technologies to Ubuntu will get noticed by ATI and NVidia because their products will likely have new consumers with new demands of their hardware experience. In turn, this could mean better quality driver support from these companies.

In my mind, a big reason for the growing interest these companies have in Ubuntu is that they see it as an "emerging" platform. With Ubuntu, we have a good technical platform along with con-

sumer-grade improvements to the desktop and user experience, and we see continued growth when it comes to hardware vendors and OEMs shipping Ubuntu. We also see continued interest in Ubuntu in India, China, and other emerging markets. Ubuntu has proven to be popular in these markets. For these reasons, I have no doubt that publishers and studios see this collection of attributes as an enticing carrot on the end of a rather intriguing stick. Also, I suspect that frustrations with Microsoft – and to an extent, Apple – are likely fueling some of this exploration.

So, the times are a-changing, and in a positive way, which means improved options for Ubuntu users, the quality of our platform, and the visibility of Ubuntu.

Now, I imagine many of you are as excited as I am about all of this. You may be also wondering what you can do to help make all of this happen. My primary recommendation is to tell your friends about Ubuntu and encourage them to use it, and when these products come out, vote with your wallets and buy the games. Remember, the games industry is all about volume: If people buy the games, game developers will port them for Ubuntu.

These are exciting times, my friends, and I look forward to taking this ride with you all. ■

For many years, we have been working hard to build a powerful, flexible, and elegant Ubuntu.

This effort has involved taking an honest look at the many different parts of Ubuntu and identifying areas in which we can improve and refine the user experience. We don't want Ubuntu to be "just another Linux distro;" we want Ubuntu to be a fantastic system for everyone, which means making it not only a great Linux distro, but also a great alternative to our competitors in the proprietary software world.

This energy has been invested in a variety of different areas, such as desktop and device improvements. A tremendous amount of work has also gone into Juju and the cloud orchestration side of Ubuntu. For Ubuntu to be truly ubiquitous, it needs to be a powerful solution for consumers, business users, and the enterprise. Because of our focus on the desktop, devices, and cloud, there has never been a more exciting time to be part of the Ubuntu camp.

In the past six months, we've seen some particularly exciting news on the gaming front, including the news that EA is exploring Ubuntu as a platform for games [1], Valve is bringing Steam to Ubuntu [2], developers are working on a Carmageddon port for Linux [3], and the Unity game engine is coming soon.

INFO

- [1] EA Games and Ubuntu:
<http://fridge.ubuntu.com/2012/05/08/ea-games-and-ubuntu/>
- [2] Steam Under Linux:
https://developer.valvesoftware.com/wiki/Steam_under_Linux
- [3] Carmageddon:
<http://www.kickstarter.com/projects/stainlessgames/carmageddon-reincarnation/posts/241390>



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