

# LETTERS

Recently we asked readers to give us their first impressions on Unity and HUD, and we received quite a few detailed responses. We didn't have the space in this issue to run every letter, so we rounded up excerpts to show how readers around the globe are handling recent Ubuntu changes.

## UNITY IN INDIANA

A reader in Indiana, William J. Howard, writes, "I read with interest your opening editorial in *Ubuntu User* Summer 2012 [issue #13], and I have some personal observations. I will readily acknowledge that I am firmly committed to the concept of open source and I really enjoy Linux in general and Ubuntu in particular. But I am also a Computer Forensic Analyst with the Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department who daily uses Linux applications to 'get the job done.' When Canonical abandoned the Gnome desktop for Unity, I despised it, and I immediately replaced Unity with Gnome 3. But things I read in *Ubuntu User* et al. prompted me to conclude that Canonical was determined to force the Unity issue. Since I am required to use a number of Windows applications (because they cannot be ported to Linux), and because a third-party Windows utility — Rocket Dock — provides a Unity-like environment without obliterating the existing user interface, I was able to adapt gradually. The result was that over time and by using a Windows utility, I became more familiar with Unity. I eventually relented and installed an unmodified version of Ubuntu 12.04 on my Linux box. Had I gone 'cold turkey' and had to learn BOTH Unity as well as the Head Up Display, the resulting loss of the time needed to adapt would have been simply unacceptable. Although I, too, have often heard that 'change is good,' I am also reminded that 'If it ain't broke, don't fix it!' And as for your former employer's mantra to the effect that *change is good*, I would point out that change *always* necessitates an investment of time and effort in order to accommodate that change. One more cliché seems to be appropriate: *Time is money!*"

## UNITY IN SOUTH AFRICA

A reader in South Africa, Phillip Gray, says that his computer experience started with a Commodore 64, then he moved on to a 286 with DOS 3.1. Gray then used DOS versions up to DOS 6.6 before moving to Windows. Eventually, he tried Linux (Ubuntu 9.04) and now runs Ubuntu 10.04 LTS. "I have tried both the Unity and Gnome 3 (which I downloaded from the Gnome 3 website) desktops," Gray writes. "I have not decided yet which is the worst one out of the two. I personally think that Unity is the worst desktop I have ever seen and used. I work for an airline in South Africa and do scripting for a program that is used in our call centre. I have been testing our program on Windows 7, which also has a horrible desktop, but which I think is better than Unity. Gnome 2 is much better than Unity and Gnome 3."

Gray says that Unity is not user friendly because, among other things, users spend an inordinate amount of time finding

things and it is cumbersome. Gray concludes by saying, "The Ubuntu developers seem to have an *One size fits all* approach. That one setup fits a desktop PC, a laptop, a tablet, a smart phone. Sadly it does not. Finally it is also my impression that the Ubuntu developers are, with each release, following more and more the Microsoft approach of deciding for their users what their users want, how their users should work, and giving their users what they do not want. I feel that it is time the Ubuntu developers took a leaf out of the book of the Mint developers who listen to what their users want, hence the very attractive and useful Cinnamon desktop."

## UNITY IN AUSTRALIA

An Australian reader, Bob Buckley, writes, "I am in my 70s and have been using computers since the early 1980s when I was a practicing architect. Thoroughly, excuse me, pissed off with Windows, I switched to Ubuntu [Ubuntu 6.06.2 LTS, Dapper Drake], first as a dual boot and very quickly Ubuntu alone. ... I have no intention of changing my OS again. ... I like Unity a lot, and although I regretted the passing of the traditional Gnome desktop, I have come to grips with Unity and am quite happy to use that from now on. HUD is a different issue — I don't like it, and don't really see much point for using it. Otherwise I am, as you will have guessed, an Ubuntu devotee."

## FROM UNITY TO CRUNCHBANG

Andrew Donovan-Shead wrote in and says that he is not a fan of Unity and the direction in which Canonical is headed with Ubuntu. "So change is a good — it forced me out of a computing rut," he writes. "I looked at several alternative distros, finally settling on CrunchBang Linux for my laptops and netbooks; I really like OpenBox and, oddly, I'm not bothered by the typing and rarely use the menu system, making extensive use of Alt-F2 then typing the first few letters of the application followed by tab to auto-complete. ... CrunchBang is based on Debian, which means I'm closer to the source upstream than Ubuntu is now. Having got the taste for purity of computing, I installed Slackware on a FitPC v1.0 that once ran Ubuntu Hardy Heron. Lately, I've been having thoughts of moving to Secure BSD." Although the changes in Ubuntu inspired Donovan-Shead to move away from Ubuntu, he didn't move away from Linux. "Yes, Unity started an avalanche of change," he writes. "I love Unity; it made me a better geek."

Donovan-Shead says that he works with the Big Brothers Big Sisters of America program, and he has introduced several low-income families to Linux and Ubuntu as alternatives to Microsoft products. "Most recently, I got my nephew interested in the Raspberry Pi," he writes. "My experience in computing dates from the era of analog vacuum-tube technology. I've always liked UNIX and its derivatives." ■