Introduction

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I feel many things; honoured and embarassed; I am only an amateur musician and came late to audio processing and to Linux. Many years I worked in computer algebra, LISP, Simulation and Compilers. My first home computer ran (real) UNIX, and transformed our living room....

My text is taken from the Bristol and Bath Linux Users' Group.

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Why do No Serious Musicians use Linux?
LAC2009

John ffitch

University of Bath

LAC Parma, April 2009

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Quotation

Why do No Serious Musicians use Linux?

Quotations

I never heard about anyone doing music who would consider using Linux. "There is no way open source can come up with an infrastructure like cubase *et al.*".

Quotations

I know someone who's a lecturer in electronic music (not sure what else), and does a lot of work with things like Cubase etc. His opinion which he's shared with me a few times (unasked for) is: Linux audio is crap, he's tried Ardour and Rosegarden and regards them as crap too. The sound path in Linux is unreliable, most audio plugins aren't available or don't work reliably on it, and the tools available aren't well designed anyway.

Quotations

I suspect it's not "free therefore crap" bias, but that Linux audio software probably was a bit crap, compared with the pro stuff he uses, when he tried it. Maybe it's got better now, or maybe the things he expects are simply not targetted. Or maybe it is GIMP syndrome: different therefore not good enough.

Quotations

I must admit I find basic analogue desktop Linux audio to be crap, in that I'm lucky if the microphone works on my laptop, I have to kill the PulseAudio daemon before some apps make any sound, the mixer controls bear little resemblance to reality, and they change with every kernel version, every 5 kernels or so I get no sound at all, and the only advice I've ever found is obscure ALSA configurations or changing the options to kernel modules. Last year I had to reboot to an older kernel just to use Skype or something. On my previous laptop, audio output was fine but input never worked.

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Quotations

If basic audio is that bad, I'm not surprised if pros aren't impressed. It might work on just the right machine, or one which has been carefully set up.

All the people that I know who create music or work in the music industry use Macs.
Same goes for video.

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If you know what you want to do and have a sound engineering degree then linux is great but if you want to dabble and explore creatively its far less useful (unless you make it more useful yourself)

Success or failure with linux audio is largely a case of choosing the right soundcard , most firewire cards wont work , quite a few usb cards are starting to. Maudio , edirol (roland) and RME all make lovely audio hardware that generally works with linux.

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So to summarise the answer is like most things in linux , its getting there but not quite there yet.

I've found that having the correct breed of deceased poultry and just the right arm motion to be quite useful as well..

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..with words from

Per Börjesson
Martin Brain
Amias Channer
Jamie Lokier

Some questions

This raises many thoughts in my mind:

- "That puts me and my friends in their place"

- What do they use?

- Is it really true?

- Is the problem technical, political or... ?

- Why do we care?

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Some reactions

- How do we disseminate our message?
- What is our message?
- There are problems: ALSA API changes, Hardware Supported

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Good Things

Mentioned on BBLUG as "good things" include:

ardour, jamin, rosegarden and the jack audio connection kit

- Latency
- Software Development
- There are excellent packages available; and I suspect we all have our own list

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Final Thought

What is the role of LAC and Linux Audio?