All that and an inflatable Tux

ONTARIO LINUX FEST

New venue for Ontario Linux Fest 2008 puts the community into the conference. **BY EMMA JANE HOGBIN**

In their second annual one-day conference, which took place October 25, 2008, Ontario Linux Fest [1] proved that location really does matter. This year the conference moved from an industrial-sized convention center to the conference facilities of a Toronto-based hotel and completely changed the tone of the experience they offered. Instead of being in awe of the high ceilings and overpriced coffee stands, attendees dug into the free coffee and started talking about stuff that really matters. Even the vendor area, with its natural light and a view into a garden courtyard, promoted conversation.

Throughout the day, attendees were offered 26 sessions, including conference presentations, birds-of-a-feather meetings, workshops, and two keynotes. *Linux Magazine*'s own Jon 'maddog' Hall delivered two presentations, including a revised rendition of his popular talk, "Sustainable Computing." Jeremy Allison delivered the second keynote presentation.

In his new presentation, called "Living La Vida Linux," Allison walked the audience through his adventures in music

collecting, format-shifting, and legality. His biggest question was, "Do I have the rights to format-shift my music?" Unfortunately, the answer is: It depends. If you are located in the United States, the answer depends on your state and jurisdiction. In an ideal world, you would be allowed to format-shift your music and use lossless encodings that are free of software patents and other use restrictions. Allison went beyond music and the Internet and reached back into the world of print and recommended *Rainbows End* by Vernor Vinge [2].

Typically, I find it fairly easy to motor through a vendor area, chat with the folks I know, and head back into the presentation rooms. This time, however, I was drawn into two specific booths for unexpected conversations about licensing and documentation. The first was FOSSology [3]. Their bribe was a women's T-shirt in exactly my size and with a user-license agreement printed on the back. It wasn't the free T-shirt that kept me at the booth; rather, it was Bob Gobeille and his passion for the project. The FOSSology project has created a tool that quickly allows you to determine how a project was licensed. Seems easy enough – just grep through the source code and look for words, right? But what if the license had been modified? FOSSology gives you a highlighted comparison of the license that has been included in the code against the default version of the license. Need to know whether any conditions have been tucked into the preamble of the GPL? With FOSSology you

can quickly find this information for every contributed package in a distro. Currently, you can download the FOSSology source code and run the application locally, although there might be an online version of this tool in the future.

The second booth that lured me in was the BSD booth. Staffing the booth were authors Joseph Kong (*Designing BSD Rootkits: An Introduction to Kernel Hacking*) and Dru Lavigne (author of *BSD Hacks* and *The Best of FreeBSD Basics* and editor of *Open Source Business Resource* [4]). Lavigne has been exploring alternative revenue models, including Print On Demand services, for the books she has written.

Music, software licensing, and documentation were three topics that I did not expect to find at a Linux conference, and yet all three were absolutely relevant and interesting. Maybe there is life beyond the kernel and the code. Of course, there was also a little speculation about when it would really be "The Year of the Desktop." Allison reminded the audience that free and open source software will prevail (eventually). After all, we can wait: We don't depend on the money and we'll still be here when you get fed up with Windows 2028. Let's all party like it's 2037!

Looking Forward

This was the second year for the Ontario Linux Fest, an event that offers a roster of industry experts and costs less than a tank of gas. People who are interested in helping out with the 2009 conference are encouraged to get in touch with the volunteer team of organizers [5]. ■
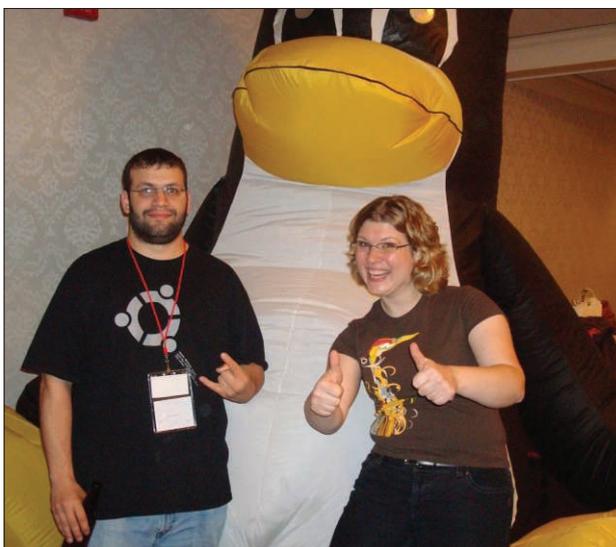
Figure 1: Jorge Castro, Emma Jane Hogbin, and Tux.

INFO	
[1]	Ontario Linux Fest: *http://www.onlinux.ca*
[2]	*Rainbows End*: *http://en.wikipedia. org/wiki/Rainbows_End*
[3]	FOSSology: *http://www.fossology.org*
[4]	*Open Source Business Resource*: *http://www.osbr.ca*
[5]	Volunteer: *http://onlinux.ca/about*