Organizing windows with Whaw

BATTLING THE WINDOW JUMBLE

If you're weary of sorting through overlapping windows, Whaw will help you get organized. **BY HAGEN HÖPFNER**

No computer screen is ever big enough to organize a large number of windows in a perfect way. Windows can overlap and restrict the user's view of the other windows in the background. Although some window managers such as KWin (the KDE window manager) offer settings that allow users to specify how newly opened windows will be organized, this will not help you arrange a window jumble that already exists. This is where Whaw [1] can help. Whaw is a window-manager-independent window layout tool. The tool not only supports Gnome and KDE, it is also quite happy with simpler window managers such as WindowMaker. Whaw lets you click to align windows side by side or drop all your active windows in a previously defined area.

Building the Window Cleaner

Before you can run Whaw, you first need to build the tool from source code. To build Whaw, first download the current version 0.1.2 from [2], unpack the archive, and install the program using the normal three stage process: *./configure && make && su -c "make install"*. This puts the executable in */usr/local/bin*. Our Suse Linux 9.3 test machine needed the *popt-devel* library to build the pack-

age; Debian needs both *libpopt-dev* and *libxmu-dev*.

Entering the Ring

Take a look at the original scenario in Figure 1. The three terminal windows overlap, and the situation is aggravated by a Gimp window.

Figure 1: Chaos reigns at the start. The windows are disorganized – high time to launch the manager-independent window layout tool, Whaw.

To allow the virtual window cleaner to get down to work, enter *whaw* at the console, then move the mouse to the top left corner of the screen to activate Whaw. The mouse pointer turns into a four-pointed arrow. Now drag the mouse to the right along the top edge of the screen. The mouse pointer changes again, into a double arrow pointing left and right. In other words, you have se-
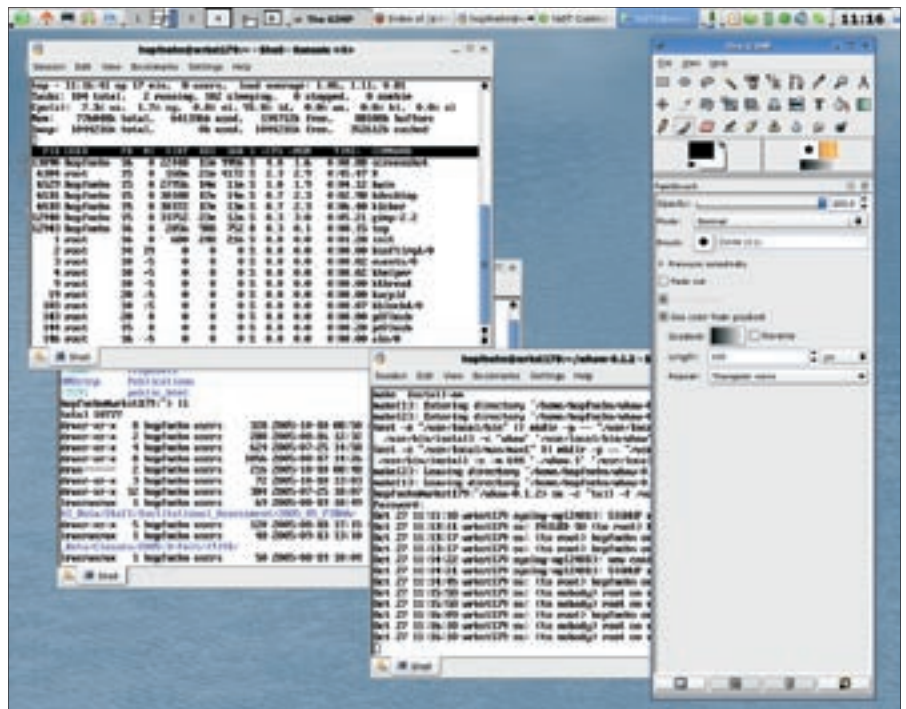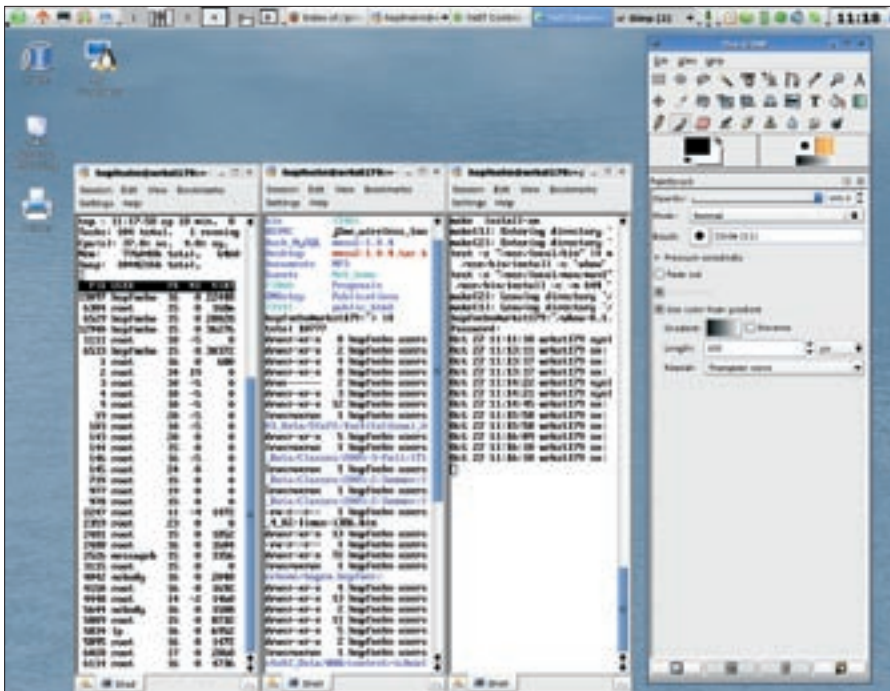
Figure 2: Vertical realignment with Whaw.

lected vertical tiling. Left click any window to send it to the kicker and give you access to the underlying windows. Follow the same steps for all the windows you would like to realign. Then hold down the left mouse button and drag the mouse around the area where you would like Whaw to position the windows. The program will handle scaling and positioning automatically. Figure 2 shows the result of vertical realignment in a selected area of the desktop. To spread the windows across the full length of the screen, simply select a few windows and right click on the desktop.

To tile horizontally, first activate Whaw by clicking in the top left-hand corner, then drag the mouse down along the left border of the screen. The mouse pointer changes to a double arrow pointing up and down to indicate the selected mode. The procedure is then similar to vertical tiling.

If you mistakenly select a window for tiling, simply drag the mouse to the top left-hand corner of the screen. This tells Whaw to revert to the original scenario but stay active. To disable the tool, just right click the empty desktop. ■