

After Thoughts

AfterThoughts is an occasional publication of After Hours Macintosh Consulting. An independent Apple Macintosh™ service firm in North Carolina's Triangle (Raleigh, Durham, Chapel Hill). For subscription information via email: AfterHoursConsulting@att.net <http://home.att.net/~afterhoursconsulting/> (919-271-7479 voice, 919-788-0099 fax)

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NEWS

There's a lot of talk about Linux lately. What's the fuss and why does it matter to us Macintosh users? Linux (pronounced Lynn-ex) is the desktop version of Unix, a type of computer operating system like System 7 or OS 8. Traditionally, Unix is the heart of the big mainframe computers found in academic, government and large business sites. The same system used on most of the computers which comprise the Internet (the "why" behind MIME files, but that's another story). This is also the system that has Microsoft scared, because of the "f" word below.

While being able to run a huge computer is a feat on to itself, compared with our relatively simple personal machines, Linux gets its biggest applause for being incredibly stable and very, very fast. Imagine being able to run with no crashes (or loss of data) for months or years at a time. We personal computer users can hardly conceive of a week without an unfortunate crash. Within the last few years, several versions of Linux have found their way to both Mac and Windows users with all the stability we've always dreamed of... and the kicker is that this system is available for free! No, really, for *free*. How? Linux is being developed by teams of programmers creating a system we've always needed, and is the ultimate "right price". Commercial versions are also available, with the added benefit of documentation and technical support (there are limits to "free").

So what's the catch? There are two, really, and they're still pretty big ones. (1) Linux is not nearly as easy to learn or configure for your desktop or laptop. It's not graphical, with command lines and such, which is exactly why we moved away from DOS (and still used beneath Windows). (2) There are only a handful of applications available (an office-ish suite and Photoshop-like image package), but not the plethora of software Macs have now. Those drawbacks are quickly being addressed by the developers. But for the brave, taking an old 6100 and giving it new life as a Linux print server, handling print jobs faster than a G3 can pay off handsomely -- with just a little work. Even Intel boxes run the way they should! For more info, take a look at: www.cdrom.com/titles/os/turbomac.html, www.linuxppc.org, and www.redhat.com, among many other sites. §

Frequently Asked Questions

- **FAQ:** Should I turn off my computer at night?
- **AH:** That depends on who's paying your electric bill, whether you have adequate surge protection, and what kind of network backup solution your IT or MIS department has instituted, but most of the time the answer is a conditional YES! Most recommendations to leave a computer on overnight are misguided. You are weighing the savings of a few dollars in machine or part lifetime for five or ten-fold as much wasted electricity. The economics doesn't bear out the claims made by folks that it is smarter to leave equipment on. It is usually smarter to shut down! For a more detailed explanation of the whys and why nots, download our white page: <http://home.att.net/~afterhoursconsulting/FAQs.html>

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Safety Recall:

Iomega recently announced a safety problem with some of the power supplies sold with their external Jaz drives. Iomega calls the little black box a power supply unit, or PSU. Apparently, there is a manufacturing defect with the PSU (not the Jaz drive itself or cartridges). The PSU has a black plastic cover around the transformer, which can split and open, exposing high-voltage electronics as a shock hazard to unsuspecting owners.

Iomega encourages you to contact them if your PSU shows signs of cracking or breaking around the seam of the black box. They will replace it free of charge, 800-781-3296 or www.iomega.com/support/recalls/index.html for more information.

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