## Operative word for OS: free

## Linux, which you can download at no charge, is liberating in many ways / Simson L. Carfinkel

not a monopoly.

More than 7.5 million computer
users around the world are running Linux on their personal computers. Linux users can do word processing run a spreadsheet, surf the Web, send email – and do it all without running a single byte of Microsoft code

And their computers can do much more, like typeset mathematical equations, run banks of fax machines, act as file servers for Windows, Mac, and Novell networks, and even be a "frewall" between the Internet and private networks.

The reason for both the power and the popularity of Linux is the fact that it is "free" software.

On one level, "free" refers to price. You can download Linux at no charge over the Internet. But "free" also refers to freedom.

With Linux you are free to give a copy to a friend. If you know how to program, you're free to modify the Linux operating system, because Linux comes with the source code. Even if you are just a user, you'll find Linux liberating as well. That's because the Linux utilities generally have more power than their Windows

In recent years Linux has made impressive gains in universities and is starring to make inroads in a number of businesses. Nevertheless, Linux has retained its reputation as a hacker's OS—an operating system for people who really understand a computer's inner workings and love tinkering.

Year award for 1997. zine's prestigious Product of the 5.0 received Inf>World Maganized. Recently Red Hat Linux Red Hat's work has been recoging significant business sales. And thing: The firm now has more Red Hat is clearly on to someinstall and simple to administer a version of Linux that is easier to Red Hat has worked hard making take Linux mainstream. Based in than 40 employees and is record-Research Triangle Park, N.C., year-old start-up that's trying to Red Hat Software is a four-

Before you decide to go with Linux, it's a good idea to take inventory of your PC's hardware and write down the manufacturer and model number of your video, network, and sound cards. Then hop over to Red Hat's Web site (www.RedHat.com) and make sure your hardware is supported.

Although Linux supports a variety of hardware, there's a lot of equipment out there that will nev-

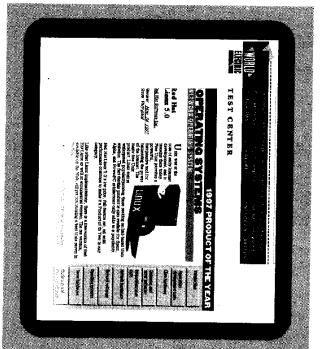
er make the cut. This lack of support is really the fault of the hardware vendors: While they write their Wincows drivers, they have traditionally ignored non-Microsoft operating systems, waiting instead for some motivated hobbyist to write the driver for them. Even worse, some companies have routinely shot themselves in the foot by refusing to release the technical information necessary to get the job done.

"We are into a constant game of catch-up," admits Robert Young, Red Hat's president. Complicating the problem is the fact that Linux can't properly implement Microsoft's "plug-and-play" standard because critical parts of the "standard" are undocumented. Nevertheless, the situation is improving. More ard more hardware

vendors are taking the Linux market seriously and developing drivers for the operating system.

in a future release this procedure wil be streamlined what you are doing. Hopefuly, tem. Although there's enough the manual first in order to know these questions, you've got to read user's manual to help you answer information in the clearly written you will partition your hard drive 5.0 forces you to fgure out how parts of the Linux operating sysbetween Windows and the various The main problem is that Red Hat than 20 minutes) but complicated with two CD-ROMs, two floppy dows 95. Installation is fast (less Linux or combine Linux and Windevote your entire hard drize to disks, and a thick manual. You car The Red Hat 5.0 box comes

Red Hat Linux 5.0 was InfoWorld Mag azine's 1997 Product of the Year.



Red Hat 5.0 comes with an astonishing number of games developer's tools, and network software, all preinstalled and ready to go. There's even a copy of Netscape Navigator version 4.04, the Apache Web server, and the "samba" file server, which lets a single Linux machine serve files to a network of PCs. The CD-ROMs are filled with additional software arranged in easy-to-install packages.

Microsoft's Office 97. form, which will let people run nonths. Meanwhile, Red Hat is in will get much bette: in a few nor any way to split the screen, "I Windows PC emulator to the plat naving the company port its Soft says Young, although he hints it can't defend Applix a great deal," count" feature in Applix Words, For example, there is no "word all work, they are cuite primitive. graphics package, and an e-mail word processor, a spreadsheet, a Office Suite, which consists of a liscussions with Insigma about reader. Although the applications Red Hat also sells the Applix

Of course, for many Linux users, wishing for Soft Windows is missing the point of free software Instead of pining away for Office 97, somebody should go out and write something that is better than Office. Then give it away

Red Hat is bringing out 5.1 this summer. People who buy 5.0 row will be able to download the update over the Internet. And of ourse, it will be free.

Publisher: Red Hat Software
Title: Linux 5.0
Price: \$49.95 per CD-ROM
Title: Applix Office Suite
Price: \$99.95 per machine