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Peeking in the Windows of ReactOS 0.3.1

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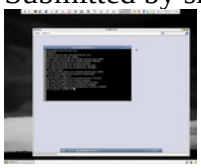

[4]With the internetnews.com article [5] published today, I found myself a bit curious as to what ReactOS exactly was and what it looked like. Well, I had a bit of a hard time finding out what exactly it was, but I did find out what is wasn't. Apparently it isn't a wine on top of linux and it isn't Microsoft.

The ReactOS website states, "ReactOS is a free and open-sourced operating system based on the Windows architecture, providing support for existing applications and drivers, and an alternative to the current dominant consumer operating system." It also says what it ain't. It's stated as, "It is not another wrapper built on Linux, like WINE. It does not attempt or plan to compete with WINE; in fact, the user-mode part of ReactOS is almost entirely WINE-based and our two teams have close ties. ReactOS is also not "yet another OS". It does not attempt to be a third player." But it never says what exactly it is, at least for my mind. I think they are trying to say that it's an entirely new system largely compiled from c and c++ source that utilizes and interacts with the wine apis and dlls to duplicate the functions of the Windows NT system. That's what the code looks like to a lay person like myself anyway.

I decided the best way to try and see what ReactOS is was to download [6] the livecd and take a look at it. Unfortunately, it wouldn't boot on my desktop machine [7], instead just stopping at the nice boot splash. However, it would boot in an emulator on my Linux desktop. I was able to look around just a bit, but there wasn't much there. Of course, with a 70mb image, I didn't expect much.

[8] [9] [10]

As you can see from the screenshots, the Programs menu is grayed out. I was able to open some of the system tools found in the Settings Menu. Most didn't work, but I was able to set a background and preview a screensaver [11]. It didn't take too much clicking around before the system became unusable and I had to restart it. As an alpha grade

product, this wasn't unexpected. In fact, I was pleasantly surprised it even booted (so quickly even under emulation) and worked at all.

[12] [13] [14]

I think it's an admirable idea and the developers are apparently skilled and dedicated, but I'm just not sure this system will take off. It's already outdated looking. I'm not sure who would want to run a desktop that looks like Windows 98 anymore or wants to run old NT or 2003 software. I guess there are a few probably who might be interested in a free and open source system that could run software designed for an older Microsoft system if it was ready to go right now. I don't want to hurt anyone's feelings, but I'm afraid that by the time this system is ready to go, most folks will have already made their choice between Vista, OS X, or Linux. There may be a niche, but it will probably be small. I could be and hope I am wrong, so let's just keep an eye on this interesting project and see what happens.

[15]

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