

# OpenSolaris and its killer features. Coming to a GNU/Linux near you?

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When we think of free operating systems we tend to think overwhelmingly of the big hitters (all GNU/Linux) like Debian, Ubuntu, Fedora and Mandriva and then of those niche distros that have been designed for low end systems or for specialist purposes like security and forensics. But Oranges are not the only fruit. There is a hinterland out there called Unixland, populated by other less well known systems whose roots are firmly Unix too. BSD for example, famed for its rock-like security. OpenSolaris is another one, perhaps less well known, but it has features that are well worth a punt.

An OS with pedigree

OpenSolaris is an operating system with its roots in Sun's Solaris (though they have been taken over by Oracle). This symbiosis is similar to the relationships between Fedora/Redhat and SUSE/OpenSuse. Initially, Sun software was tied to the SPARC platform but with the advent of OpenSolaris, the kernel was made available for the X86 architecture too. Think Sun and you tend to think Servers, but when they hired Ian Murdock (the founder of Debian) in 2007 they signaled that they were serious about OpenSolaris on the desktop. He duly produced a friendly and very familiar Gnome-based desktop (and many other community-based versions) which could be booted as a live CD with the option to install to a hard drive.

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