

# 'Proprietary software keeps users helpless'

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Without Richard Matthew Stallman there would be no GNU, and without GNU there would be no Linux distributions as we know them today.

Richard Matthew Stallman started the GNU's Not Unix project in 1983 to create a totally free operating system, and later the General Public License to guarantee its freedom. By 1991 much of GNU was finished, although it was lacking a kernel - that's where Linus Torvalds and his Linux kernel come in.

Despite the success of GNU/Linux, Stallman hasn't opted for an easy life: he campaigns tirelessly to protect our software freedoms, alerting us to potential threats that new technologies bring.

Linux Format magazine met Richard at the Institute of Engineering and Technology in London, and put to him some of the questions you asked?

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