

The Uncertain Age of Steam on Linux

By *srlinuxx*

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Linux has not received much attention from the major gaming houses, even though it seems a natural fit as a robust gaming platform, so the announcement of the Steam for Linux beta last December generated a lot of interest.

A Linux game port can be done in one of two ways. The first way is to use the operating system's own resources and to make allowance for a variety of versions and functionally equivalent applications. The second way is to recreate the norms of another operating system and require specific applications and versions. Despite the client being available as a .DEB package, Valve's Steam beta for Linux generally opts for the second approach, making it less promising than it might have been.

Steam is a multi-platform software distribution tool that includes social features such as friends lists and chat, both in-game and out. Although Steam has recently started carrying other software, its main emphasis is games and related items, particularly ones written by smaller development houses.

[rest here](#) [3]

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