Installing openSUSE 10.2 on a Compaq laptop (Part 1)

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Created *20/12/2006 - 2:48am*
Submitted by eco2geek on Wednesday 20th of December 2006 02:48:57 AM Filed under Reviews [1]

My favorite distro faces an uncertain future [2], so I decided to install openSUSE 10.2 over it on my Compac Presario V2000. Also because... OK, I'll come clean: the real reason was for the eye candy. I wanted Beryl [3], with the cube, the wobbly windows, the "magic lantern" window minimizing effects, rain, snow -- you know, Eye Candy.

This laptop has an ATI Radeon XPress 200M chipset in it, which requires the installation of ATI's proprietary drivers in order to enable accelleration, and (unlike an NVidia chipset) also requires Xgl [4] in order to get the special effects. There are Xgl packages out there for Debian Sid, but they're old and not maintained. Xgl still runs, but it makes the OS extremely flaky and crash-prone. (If you're thinking about buying a laptop, and want to use Beryl, get one with an NVidia graphics chipset and save yourself some hassle.)

One thing to note: if you have questions, the openSUSE Wiki has answers [5]. That "search" box is your friend. openSUSE is extremely well documented. (Of course, it also helps to have a second, working, Internet-connected computer around when installing any Linux distro.)

So, I downloaded the i386 DVD via BitTorrent [6] and burned it. (Yes, it took a while, but having only 1 DVD instead of 5 CDs to shuffle through makes it worth it.).

My laptop has a, shall we say, unusual partitioning scheme, mainly because Compaq uses a small FAT32 partition at the very end of the drive as a recovery partition, and it wouldn't budge when I tried to move it. That's why partitions hda3 - hda6 are sandwiched between partitions hda1 (Windows) and hda2 (that FAT32 partition). Anyway, I already had Debian/Kanotix on the laptop, with a separate /home partition (highly recommended!), so it was just a matter of refreshing my memory as to which partition was for /, /home, and swap. Only the / (root) partition needed to be reformatted. Everything on /home was staying. I booted from a live CD (the GParted disc [7] is good for this) and got rid of my old ~/.kde folder and ~/.kderc file before installing openSUSE; otherwise, KDE wouldn't have gotten the openSUSE treatment. (openSUSE renamed my existing "Desktop" folder by itself.)

There's not a lot to say about the straightforward installation process. A complete set of installation screenshots are available here [8]. The only things I messed with were the partitioning scheme (in order to use my existing layout); the software choices; and making sure GRUB was installed on hda.

(This laptop has a 1280x768 screen. openSUSE configured it properly, which was impressive.)

With the installation done, it was time to enable the laptop's built-in wireless chipset (Broadcom BCM4318) using ndiswrapper [9]. Ndiswrapper enables Linux to use Windows drivers for wireless cards for which open-source drivers

don't (yet) exist. On your typical HP/Compaq laptop, the drivers are located in C:\SWSetup\WLAN. For this laptop, they're named "bcmwl5a.inf" and "bcmwl5.sys." Then it's a matter of pulling up a console window, becoming root, and installing the drivers.

ndiswrapper -i /media/hda1/SWSetup/WLAN/bcmwl5a.inf

Then check to see that installation was successful.

ndiswrapper -l
installed drivers:
bcmwl5 driver installed, hardware present

Next, the "preferred" way to enable wireless is through YaST. (Personally, I think it's easier from the command line, using "iwconfig," but that's a Debian user talking.) The [ndiswrapper howto](#) [9] on the openSUSE wiki tells you how -- although one thing's not very clear. During installation, SUSE probably detected the wireless hardware and configured it incorrectly. You have to *delete* the wireless controller from the "Network Card Configuration Overview" list, and then add a new (wireless) one.

After the YaST part is done, the KNetworkManager applet will automagically appear in your "system tray." My gripe with KNetworkManager is that it'll look for, and connect to, the first unencrypted wireless connection it can find -- even if it belongs to your neighbor (heh, serves him right). If your wireless connection is encrypted, you have to select "Connect to Other Wireless Network..." and tell it your SSID and WEP key.

One other thing to note. For some reason, openSUSE doesn't include the Ksynaptics control panel module, which lets you fine-tune your Synaptics touchpad. Personally, I hate tapping like [Mr. Grant hates spunk](#) [10]. To disable it, one has to edit /etc/X11/xorg.conf (as root) and add a line to the synaptics **InputDevice** section, just prior to **EndSection**:

Option "MaxTapTime" "0"

Restart X, and tapping should be gone.

In [part 2: Installing the ATI driver and Beryl; Conclusion](#) [11].

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