

Flying laptops and yet another Kubuntu install epic.

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Ok so it's been relatively quiet from me these past few weeks. The need of many (bills) outweighs the need of the few (hours free). But that's not the end of it. Oh no indeed. You see, now I have a new laptop and this means endless hours farting around trying to get it to work. And why is that I hear you ask? Well, just when I had finally got my old laptop into a workable state with Kubuntu happily chugging away I had a little 'accident'.

It was a miserable cold and wet Monday morning. The daybreak delayed by the onset of heavily loaded black clouds. A typical morning in England and one I should have been used to but this wasn't England, this was Switzerland and the airport was Zurich.

The Airbus touched down and bounced along the runway, sudden braking and heavy reverse thrust throwing me forward in the seat and a sickening sound of items being thrown against the walls of the overhead bins. Glad I had put my laptop under the seat in front. I always thought it strange how those stormy landings can bring down a blanket of eerie silence over a once jubilant and boisterous set of passengers. It's raining golf balls as we taxi to the parking area. Parking area? We are so far away from the terminal I need binoculars to see it! Better put my coat on then, if only I could move with all the pre-emptive passengers, eager to disembark the tin cigar, blocking every spare inch of aisle, their mobile phones happily confirming their existence with annoying sounds and itchy tapping fingers. It's 11am, I have been awake since 11am yesterday and whatever sleep I had hoped to get on this journey soon disappeared with the gang of drunken Russians and screaming babies. Never again, no matter how cheap it is, will I fly economy from Moscow! Finally I spy a gap in the wall of bodies and make a run for it only to be cut off with centimetres to go by a huge man mountain squeezing his 3 bags of duty free between the seats. Another gap opens, I make it this time, in the queue, shuffling down the aisle, laptop and coat in hand. At the door I take a breath of clean air, I love the smell of jet fuel in the morning, smells like global warming! I'm getting wet and people are holding up the queue as they amble down the steps onto the wet tarmac. Almost there and the guy behind me slips. Like dominoes we fall, a ballet of flaying limbs in a chorus of shouts and screams. I see my laptop take to the air, slow motion pirouettes, somersaults, a half gaynor and the grand finale of an expensive thud as it crashes into the ground! Meanwhile I continue to tumble, looking for someone to cushion my landing, I hit the bottom step. I cushion the lead dominoes landing with my arm and did I hear something crack? That sort of hurt. Ignoring the pain I heave myself up with my left hand, as I can't feel my right. I swear, a lot, screaming at the lead domino. He's already suffered the indignity of flying without the airplane and now his pride is taking one hell of a beating and not just from me either. A member of the ground staff sheepishly shuffles forward and hands me the remains of my laptop, I try to take in my right hand and it made another expensive sound as it bounced off the floor, just to make sure it was truly dead. My wrist is swelling, I can't grip anything and the pain is definitely in the post. I catch sight of everyone stood motionless, mouths agape and staring at this spectacle unfolding before their very eyes. What a surprise it must have been to find such entertainment included in the ticket price. I gather my belongings and scoop up the sad and broken remains of my old faithful. Ignoring the pleas of the overly concerned ground staff for me to see a doctor I head for the terminal bus. If I see a doctor I'm in for a night in Zurich, sat in a deathly hospital waiting room with X-rays and non English speaking doctors. I would surely miss my flight home. I'm soaked, in pain, explosively angry and have 3 hours to kill before my flight.

Luckily the affects of the painkillers kicked in early and the 3 hours didn't seem that long. Wait, what am I saying, it seemed like an eternity for them to tick by!

Wandering aimlessly round, trying hard not to spend money, visiting the same shop three times to find the price didn't change once! I have two cards of the plastic variety with me: a maestro and a visa. The visa has probably just been maxed in Moscow and the only cash in my pocket is 5000 roubles, roughly 100 English pounds. The exchange rate for euros is akin to daylight robbery so I refuse out of principle. Suddenly I find that I am hungry and in need some sustenance so I head for the nearest quiet place.

"Do you take cards?" I inquire.

"Yes", the woman replies in her German laden accent.

So I order and present her with the card.

"Not maestro", she barks.

I nervously hand her the visa, positive it will be knocked back. With relief it goes through. This is not a good day at all. Anyway, 3 hours later the sign shows that the flight is delayed half an hour due to extra security precautions on flights from Manchester it is late landing. Bloody Terrorists and mythical plots written by corrupt governments. Finally we are called, to the bus, to the plane. Settling into my seat and ready to doze with the painkillers the Captain informs us that we have missed our take off slot and course, awaiting new instructions from the voice in the head. The old Swiss couple next to me are at least quiet, reading some tourist book of England. Why? Who the hell wants to see this hellhole? Apart from the 500,000 polish immigrants complaining and asking the government to bar the Romanians next year as all the jobs will go! So that would be the English jobs you polish people are doing? Well after another 70 minutes waiting, we are in the air. Time to die.

Thirty minutes into the flight, barely awake, I am conscious of my clothes being pawed. Managing to prise open an eye I find that a child has mysteriously materialised on the knee of the granny next to me. It is of the male variety, about 18 months old and amused with itself and the pulling of my shirt. Snot everywhere. The owners of this thing are sat 4 rows behind. The grandparents had decided they wanted to play with it for a while and they think this is amusing. I groan, close my eyes, pull my shirt out of the vice like grip, rest my head against the window and try to sleep.

We must have hit some turbulence and I'm woken with a noise worse than nails on the blackboard and 100 times the volume. The little bundle of joy is obviously not very happy and is loudly expressing its dissatisfaction. Lovely. After 20 minutes of incessant screaming I kindly ask the grandparents to deposit the child elsewhere as I am in pain and need sleep. They decline my offer so I pop the painkillers, fix my laptop and watch hardcore angry pornography. Which is what I wished I could have done except that my painkillers were almost gone and the laptop was in numerous pieces. Instead, I asked for more alcohol and I must have really looked like a total sad case as the stewardess gave me three shots of whiskey and two bottle of red wine. Travellers? cocktail. The rest of the flight is a blur.

So, back to the long forgotten point. My laptop was damaged so I put in a claim. The money, I am reliably informed, is in the post in the form of a cheque therefore I bought a new one. This time I went all Sony and bought a Vaio AR11M of decent spec with a 2GB memory upgrade.

Day 1, I left it alone in its default state.

Day 2, I tried to install Kubuntu beta 6.10. It crashed about 90% through the install, after I had repartitioned the entire disk. Needing to do some work I thought it was time to put XP on back on for a quick customer fix. "You have no hard disk" I was nicely informed. The painful process of full restore from the two dvds takes three hours.

Day 3, I try Kubuntu 6.10 again, on a new CD, freshly downloaded, burned with a different drive. At 90% it gives up. I install Kubuntu 6.06, give up and go to bed at 1.30am. Last night.

I will try to install the beta of 6.10 through adept and see what happens. I am just praying that when it installs it sees everything, as there are a number of things I want to have working.

The built-in web cam need to work as I videoconference quite often with customers and when I work from home on the big blue contract.

WIFI is a must, preferably without NDIS Wrapper.

Would be nice to have the TV tuner working so I will a good look at MythTV.

Sound is a definite.

The wrist had two fractures, there were another two in the thumb and 2 fingers had one each. The laptop was buried with full honours on Tuesday evening. Farewell to thee my dear, dear friend. Alas, poor Compaq, I knew it well Horatio. A device of infinite installs and bugs.

As for speed request on the last bout of Literary diarrhoea, the normal connection speed is around 6-8 mbps over the wireless link around the house. Therefore if she only has a 2mbps internet upgrading to G won't make a difference at this stage. Bet you couldn't sleep at nights wondering about that one!

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