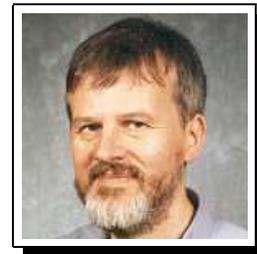


Linux & GIMP for Photographers: Getting Started

Peter Gawthrop was given a digital camera (Nikon Coolpix 7500) as a birthday present three years ago and thus took up digital photography. He joined the RPS and DIG in December 2004 and has learned a lot from the Folio pages. Now he has a Canon Powershot Pro 1 and is chasing that elusive LRPS. Though a beginner in photography, Peter has used Linux since the mid '90s and all his computers are Microsoft-free zones. He now uses the Linux tools GIMP, Hugin and ImageMagick to process his images. This article shows an easy route to try out Linux and GIMP without changing anything on your computer – comments and queries to the DIG Forum, please.



Linux (www.linux.org)¹, together with the associated **GNU** (www.gnu.org) project, is a widely-used operating system developed by software engineers worldwide. It is free both in the sense of “freedom” and “free beer”.

Knoppix (www.knoppix.org) is a version of Debian GNU/Linux which runs off a “live” CD. This provides an easy introduction to Linux *without* touching your hard disk²; a disadvantage is that running from a CD can be slow. To get started, do the following³: Buy a Knoppix CD (for example from Use Linux (www.uselinux.co.uk) who do one for £2 at the time of writing). Put it into your CD tray and reboot the computer; the computer should boot into Knoppix.⁴ At the Knoppix prompt just press enter (return). Eventually (this takes a couple of minutes) you should see a desktop appearing on your screen with a web browser – exit the browser with the X in it’s top right-hand corner. The toolbar is at the bottom of your screen. Towards the centre are four buttons labelled 1–4; these correspond to four different desktops – just stick with desktop 1 for the moment. The main menu button is the large K symbol at the left. Clicking on this reveals many possibilities; **K→Graphics** is of most interest to photographers: select **gtkam** now.

Gtkam (www.gphoto.org/proj/gtkam/) is a tool for extracting photos from your digital camera via a USB connection; connect your camera to your computer’s USB port. Click

Camera→Add camera menu and click **detect**; this should detect your camera which should appear in the left-hand pane; click on the triangle icons until you reach the photos – these should appear in the right-hand pane as thumbnails. Click on the thumbnail of your choice and then **File→Save photos→Selected**, select the Desktop folder, tick the relevant boxes. Give the photo the name `photo.jpg`, click OK and it will appear on your desktop.

Alternatively, if you use flash memory and a laptop, another method is to put the flash memory into the PCMCIA adaptor and a new folder (`PCMCIA disk`) will appear on your desktop. Click on this folder, and through to the folders it contains, until you find the image of your choice; drag and drop this image file to the desktop. Either way, you should now have an image file on your desktop which you can view by double clicking on it.

GIMP (www.gimp.org) is roughly like Photoshop. Click on **K→Graphics→gimp**. The file menu is in the upper left hand corner; use **File→Open** to open your image (remember it lives in Desktop). As far as I know, Gimp can do everything that PS can. Tools such as crop and clone are in the main GIMP panel; basic colour menus are in **Layer→Colors** and basic filters in **Filter→Enhance**. Explore and enjoy!

¹Look at the webpages given in this article for much more information.

²Save your work onto removable media eg floppy, flash or USB memory – see the Knoppix web site.

³**Please note that you should make sure that you back up all that you care about before starting. I cannot be held responsible for any loss or damage**

⁴If it doesn’t it may be that your BIOS will have to be changed so that the CD boots first.