

Con Kolivas quits, takes parting shots at desktop

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By Troy Unrau | Last updated July 31, 2007 7:55 AM CT

Linux kernel developer Con Kolivas has made a name for himself by maintaining the *-ck* patchset that follows the mainline kernel, but has improvements for desktop performance. Most of these improvements came via a different scheduler model for desktop responsiveness that tried to improve the feel of interactive applications. He recently announced via his mailing list that this would be his last patchset after which he would be leaving kernel development behind. He had rather a large following of users who appreciated his work, and was recently interviewed to talk about his reasons for leaving. In this interview he spends a lot of time expressing his opinions about the state of desktop computing.

According to Kolivas performance improvements gained as a result of increasingly powerful hardware haven't radically increased the efficiency of day-to-day desktop computing tasks. Kolivas acknowledges that modern computers may be doing a lot more than their predecessors, but points out that the main functions used for common activities are still the same, and in some ways, are less efficient than they were in the past. "Computers of today may be 1,000 times faster than they were a decade ago, yet the things that matter are slower," says Kolivas.

In the wake of Kolivas's departure from kernel development there is some unrest, ranging from flame-wars surrounding his scheduler to suggestions that the kernel be forked.

Linux kernel creator Linus Torvalds has suggested that Kolivas's work was excluded because of flaws in the code. Others have expressed support for Kolivas in response.

When the dust settles, perhaps we'll have a desktop optimized Linux kernel separate from the normal kernel, or one scheduler to rule them all. While this sort of upheaval is generally rare, it is sometimes all that is needed to kick-start something new and exciting in the open source world.

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