In the past, I've noticed that reviews of the various GNU/Linux OS distributions have frequently made point of their downfalls when compared to one Microsoft OS or another. This doesn't make much sense in the grand scale of things, because most-if not all-of Microsoft's advantages come from being the long-time market leader, *not* the better OS.

So, in light of that, I decided to right a few wrongs by creating a review of Windows XP Media Center Edition 2005 (which is arguably the best Microsoft OS to date) as if Linux were the market leader, and Microsoft, the upstart. Obviously, certain points must be ignored in this reverse scenario, but this will encourage an equal playing field.

The biggest factor that will be ignored is the certain proprietary softwares that are locked into the Windows world, e.g.: Adobe Photoshop, autoCAD, Corel, games, codecs, and the ever slimming list of device drivers. (I will, however, mention drivers included with the OS, just not the ones that don't exist at all.) These softwares should not be part of an honest Operating System review anyway, for once an OS proves it's worth, the market will move to support it. (Other factors omitted are: the cost of the OS's, which is preinstalled, and visual effects{Compiz, Aero}) I've obviously decided to be neutral on the proprietary v. open-source for this article, because although open standards seem to work just as well on the whole, some businesses require proprietary software for specialized equipment.

Without further ado, let's get on with the review.

The other day I purchased my first laptop, a shiny Gateway MX6453. It came with a new OS manufactured by a company called Microsoft Corp. labeled,   Microsoft Windows XP Media Center Edition 2005 Ooh, Sounds fancy. And who doesn't like a Media Center Edition? I decided to read up before installing. After a page or two of research, I found that this was actually Windows XP Professional, but with a few MCE related addons, drivers, and extra themes built-in. Admittedly, I'm a bit of a geek, and I just couldn't resist trying out this new 'toy'! The initial install was painless enough, but took an hour and a half on the Gateway; surprising only because the machine is a Turion x2 (dual-core) with 2gigs of RAM.

Nevertheless, after the install and basic setup, it seemed to work okay.
Due to the size of the install DVD, I was expecting a full-featured OS
complete with good burning software, an office suite, etc.
What I got was entirely sub-par.
No decent cd-burning software was provided,
and I found that to get one, (Nero) I would have to pay extra.
Wow. With Ubuntu, I could get K3b for free, with the benefit
of it being open-source too. If that wasn't bad enough,
I noticed that all images, fonts, and the desktop itself seemed skewed.
Hmm. Must be missing the display drivers. But before I contacted Gateway to protest
that the included OS didn't come with display drivers, I decided to browse it a bit
more(after all, display isn't a huge deal for the moment). Now, I've seen XP in use before,
so I had a general idea of how it was supposed to work.

After awhile, it dawned on me that my machine wasn't cutting it: I needed those drivers!
The sound, wifi, display, and some aspects of the MoBo and touchpad were either
not operating to their full capacity or not working *at all.* Now Ubuntu (my main OS)
did sometimes need drivers, especially for tv-cards and the like, but I had never
had so many necessary driver additons. Geez. And this is the OS that came with
the machine!

I used Gateway's free IM support, and they put up the drivers on a file-sharing
site for me. Some command line work and several restarts later, I had all the hardware working,
and had opened up an included browser called Internet Explorer 6 to my Google homepage
through the WiFi network in my house.

The interface was reminiscent of some Play Skool product, instead of one denoting
even a modest profession(unless, of course, you are a Kindergarten teacher).
But besides that, it wasn't too bad. The ability to customize seemed to be
lacking though, without some deep modification, or some extra piece of paid/trial
software.

I decided that wasn't such a big deal though. After all, in a professional setting,
customization would only serve to distract the more savvy workers.
As I navigated Google Reader, a small yellow bubble popped up near my clock,
asking me to update. With Ubuntu's update-manager in my mind, I didn't expect
any hassle, just improved functionality. I clicked the bubble, and it brought me

to a website called Windows Update. I went through the motions, first

verifying that I was using a legit copy of Microsoft's software,

then getting Microsoft's Update upgrade, then finally choosing updates.

Whew. In Ubuntu, updating was a simple, painless, get-more-freebies thing.

Compared to this, it was like opening presents on Christmas(or Hanukkah, or

Kwanzaa...Chanukwanzaa!). Well, I sighed,'At least it can't get much worse...

Yeah, I know you were expecting me to say that.

　　　Boy, was I **wrong.** It asked me to,'...restart for the changes to take effect.'

Now, after a system-wide update, this is normal for any OS you'll use. It's

what happened next that drove my annoyance home:

After the restart, I was prompted to update *again.*

Okay...I updated again. Restart. I updated again. Restart.

Finally, updates complete, (several hours later)I was then surfing happily when another bubble popped

up /ask/ing/, no, demanding that I get protective software.

After a good long time of research, I discovered that I needed

antivirus, antispyware, and a firewall, because Windows' built-in firewall

was worth next-to-nothing, forums stated.

I decided to use the free software with the highest ratings:

Adaware SE/Spybod S&D,

Avast! Home Edition

and Zone Alarm Free Firewall

It seemed to work pretty well, but of course I could not tell by myself if I had a spying

virus or two.

Zone Alarm worked well enough, but I found it funny that the manufacturers had so many

different versions, not for different uses, but each consecutive product had more features

and a bigger price tag then the last. Why didn't they just do their best with one

product? I wouldn't mind paying a little for that(provided I got free updates for

that series).

Why didn't Microsoft offer free, actually useful software for protecting it's

own?

That aside, the multiple popups from the talkative Zone Alarm began to annoy me,

and I looked more closely at the bubble. I saw it said that the identification for

the program in question was not available for that edition.

So that was it for me. It was clear I would have to pay for decent protection.

After a bit of searching I found a temporary fix: Use the trial of Zone Alarm's

more advanced edition.

I found it much better than it's cheap predecessor, but pricey to keep it.

Oh well, enough on that.

   Thus far, this OS seemed to need more expensive maintenance than what

it was worth(not to mention the EULA was the product of some nightmare plagued

drunk).

  I set out to find a redeeming quality in this OS before I dropped it completely.

First, I decided to try installing a program, namely OpenOffice,

which comes with most Linux distributions.

It's install was easy enough, but I definitely preferred Ubuntu's check-from-list-to-install

style; but it did remind me of installing .deb's..

  That was simple enough. Then I decided to install Ubuntu side by side with Windows

(dual-boot) to see if I had any driver issues in my main OS.

No such thing. In 7.10, everything worked, and it came with everything I needed.

I was a secure, office-enabled, internet-surfing computer user out of the literal box.

True, there was a glitch with the brightness control, but it did work out of the box,

which is better than can be said for poor Windows. This not mentioning that

Ubuntu's OS is only one CD in size, not a gigantic DVD.

  Continuing to use Ubuntu as the main OS for my new laptop, I did use Windows

occasionally, to see if one big update would improve it's performance

as was the case in the earlier versions of Ubuntu.

    After only a month or two of just using the computer, Windows became slow and had

a terribly groggy feel.When two security scans later came to no avail, I went searching

for the reason. After research on Microsoft's site,

 I discovered the little known fact that Windows OS's need to be 'defragmented' monthly,

and reinstalled almost annually. Realizing that I would need to understand more

about this OS to understand this cruel and unusual punishment so I did studying.

Now I know every OS has it's curves, but this was insane-(Xp doesn't have curves, it has razor-sharp

edges) I think this endless maintenance will lead less savvy users to buy a new computer annually!

  Soon enough I learned that the primary fault of Windows slow-but-sure decrease(in already sub-par)

performance rested in something called the Windows Registry.

  The Windows Registry, in a nutshell, is an all-eggs-in-one-basket issue.
As it turns out, every time you install/uninstall, update, or change a setting
in Windows, you are fiddling with the Windows Registry.
If one thing goes wrong here, you could end up with system-wide freezes,
'white-windows' (frozen programs) and BSOD's,(blue-screens-of-death(Cryptic error
messages that do zilch to remedy the problem)), and, as you can guess,
this happens allot in this system; since everything that changes affects it,
and there are frequent conflicts.

  All things considered, no matter what securities you have one well formed virus attack could take this
system down in seconds.

  It is horrific to imagine the government using such buggy(no, bugs are NOT features, Bill Gates!),
insecure software, no matter if Microsoft's techs say that the government versions
are 'special'. No matter how special they are, they aren't changing the base:
The Windows Registry. Unfortunately, that's not Achilles' heel, either: There are too many
other glitches, holes, and beta(experimental) features in this OS to even grant it 'Achilles' status.
A note to software manufacturers: don't bother with this OS; stay with Ubuntu.