

The sorry state of Open Source Software

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Who is Jack Jansen?

- ❑ Old fart: 44 years old, programming since 1975, Unix since 1977
- ❑ Python core team member
- ❑ MacPython scapegoat since 1995
- ❑ AmbulantPlayer
- ❑ above all: lazy

What is he whining about?

- Want things to work
 - So I can get on with my life
- Would like software to be
 - dependable, readable, modifiable, etc
 - affordable
- **BUT DON'T GET IN MY WAY!**

Before I begin ranting...

- ❑ I love these packages, really!
- ❑ I understand why they are in their current state
- ❑ I'm not dissing anyone

Case study: slsk MacOSX

- ❑ Great network, no prebuilt MacOSX client
- ❑ Nicotine: Python/gtk-based
- ❑ Requires: Nicotine, pygtk, Gtk+, glib, X11, atk, ffmpeg, gettext, jpeg, libpng, pango, pkgconfig, tiff, zlib, ...
- ❑ A week of evenings to build
- ❑ Cost: ± 1000 iTunes songs (wishful thinking:-)

Case Study: ffmpeg

- ❑ A/V format I/O, codecs, networking, etc
- ❑ Builds out of the box
 - ❑ But installs only half: only codecs!
- ❑ Documentation: absent
- ❑ Reading the source isn't much better..

Case study: GPGMail

- ❑ Use PGP-keys in MacOSX Mail
- ❑ First you need to find it...
- ❑ Then you need to find MacGPG...
- ❑ The scant docs assume you know everything about PGP already...
- ❑ And requires the command-line a lot!

Conclusion

- ❑ No mental model of their users
 - ❑ hence fewer users (which is a shame!)
 - ❑ commercial packages like these would have died long ago
 - ❑ ... and so may these packages...

Solutions? - I

- ❑ Learn from good OSS projects
- ❑ Read a book (if someone writes it!)
- ❑ autoxxx tools may be able to help, a little
- ❑ Learn from Mac/Win shareware
 - ❑ similar style people/teams
 - ❑ but survive commercially

Solutions? - 2

- Third parties
 - “ffmpeg in a nutshell” book
 - Apple bundles GPGMail
 - Shareware developer packages Nicotine for money
 - ... don your flamesuit:-)

Next Speaker?
Discussion?
Fistfight?
Beer?