

Papercut

Allison Moore

Papercut is a Blender-based video game in the style of traditional side-scroller roleplaying games. There is a central character and a landscape to traverse. You are a lumberjack. You must cut down trees with a chainsaw. The game world is designed combining hand drawn illustrations with cut-out scanned textures.

There are two characters to choose from: a Lumber Man and a Lumber Lady. The main character must deforest the landscape. Your only tool is a chainsaw. As you cut down trees you collect points. There is a time limit to each level, and if you meet your tally, you advance to the next level.

Papercut creates a main character with a questionable morality. In traditional gameplay, the main character is definitively good whilst any character blocking the path is definitively bad. Geographical obstacles, woodland creatures and hippies block your path.

The virtual world combines exaggerated representations of the existing world with elements interpreted from my imagination.

I played a lot of games in the 80s and early 90s, so I like vintage/retro games and this is the aesthetic that influences me most. It was hard to wrap my mind around a 3D world, so I decided to make it 2 ½D. I use 2D references of vintage games incorporated in the 3D landscape. The final result is like a paper puppet set, my 2D characters like puppets navigating through a diorama-style set built in 3D. Trees fall like leaves of paper.

<http://www.looper.ca>

What Revolution?

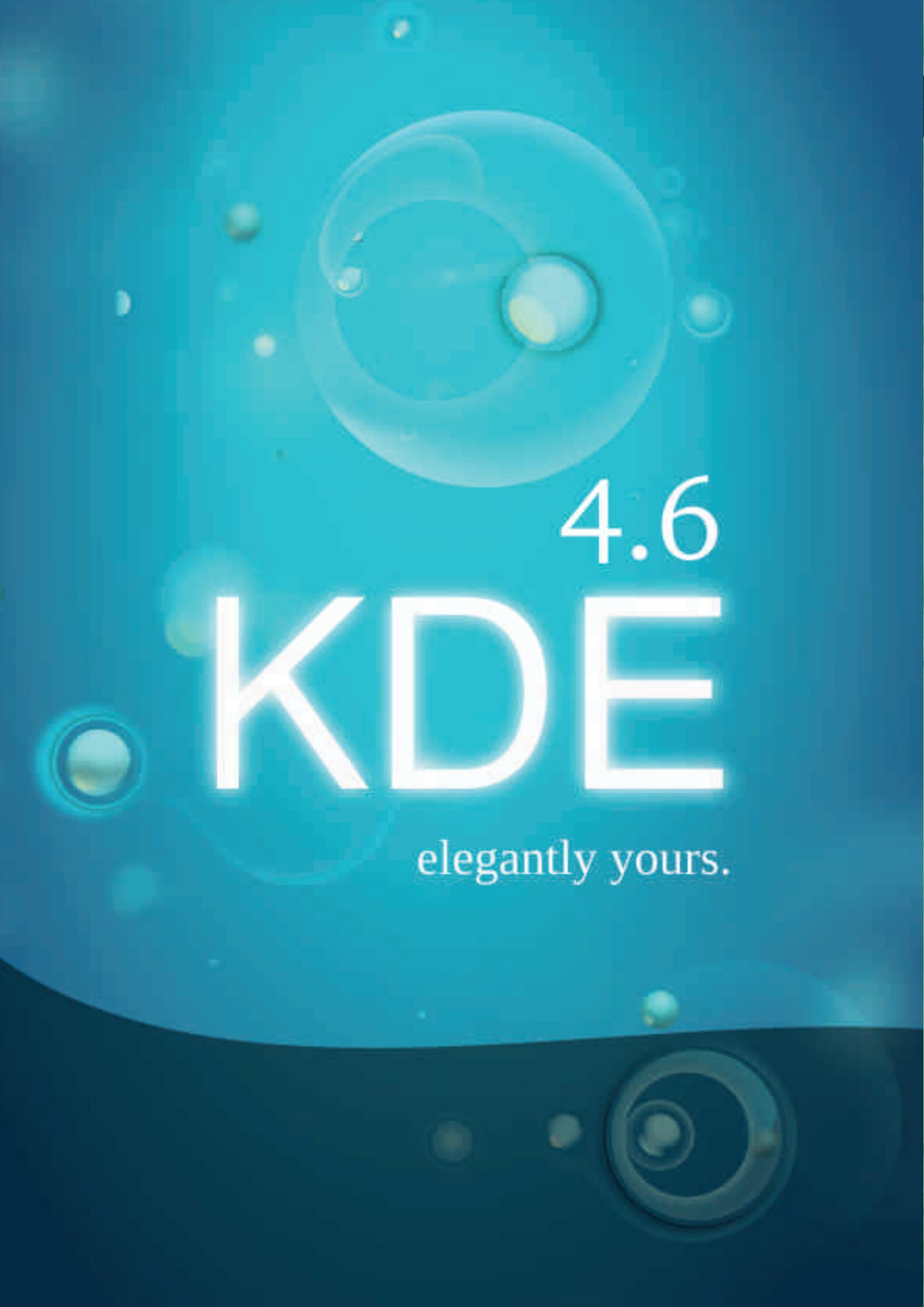
Antonio Roberts

What Revolution? is the first in a series of images challenging the ideas of celebrity and idols. The 1960 photograph of Che Guevara by Alberto Korda has been endlessly mutated, transformed, and morphed. It can be found advertising anything from belts and "hip and cool" t-shirts to health insurance. It is tacked onto political movements without much consideration of the history behind it. One has to ask if his image is still the symbol for change and revolution that it was fifty years ago, when it was furiously distributed throughout Europe by Jim Fitzpatrick in protest of the conditions of Guevera's murder.

The vector image of Che was glitched using a C script written by Garry Bulmer. The script randomises the position and other values of the nodes in the file. The background is a random image found on the Internet tagged with "Revolution," which was then glitched many times using UCNV's Glitchpng Ruby script. To get the sharp colours, I reduced the image from 8 bits to 1 bit using ImageMagick. All of the separate elements were then recomposed in Inkscape.

<http://www.hellocatfood.com>



The background features a teal-to-black gradient with several glowing, semi-transparent circles of varying sizes scattered across the surface.

4.6

KDE

elegantly yours.

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O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

1.2.3.4.5.6.7.8.9.0 " { [(.)] } "
a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z

The ever-evolving typeface for this magazine, PropCourier Sans, benefitted from some tweaks for issue 1.2. Most of the work dealt with punctuation, softening the weight of the most used punctuation glyphs.

PropCourier Sans is the official typeface for Libre Graphics Magazine, designed by Manufacture Independent. It is a friendly fork of Open Source Publishing's NotCourier Sans, a monospaced typeface which sports the statement "we are not here to be perfect". PropCourier Sans is the proportional version of NotCourier; it is an ongoing effort that will be worked on and updated on each issue of Libre Graphics Magazine. Following the "release early, release often" principle, you'll find some incompatibilities and inconsistencies in the current version, but we'd rather just use what we can have now instead of going for a finished and polished typeface – whatever "finished and polished" might mean. We decided that we would prefer being honest than being right; hence PropCourier's tagline: "we are not here to be correct."

F / LOSS

We're not here to be correct.

Making your workflow work for you

Seth Kenlon

Everyone works differently, regardless of the task. Every artist has an individual style for getting things done quickly, efficiently, and in such a way that the effort required doesn't ruin the inspiration driving the work in the first place. Whether the motivation is a client or a personal passion, the process that an artist uses to finish the job is generally known by the term "workflow."

Even though everyone tends to be unique in the way they work, much proprietary software enforces a very specific workflow. In fact, deviation from that workflow is discouraged. The nature of the business demands that a proprietary software vendor ensures its product is all an artist needs. In other words, proprietary software, in order to make the greatest sales, seeks to be a monopoly.

Many artists take this for granted because those proprietary software packages are what they learned in school or at work. Some literally do not realize there is any other option. However, on almost any platform there are a host of FLOSS tools which can enable artists to take control of how they want to work, and what works best for them.

How do you know if your workflow needs refinement? There are a few good indications:

—If you find yourself using applications to do things that they (technically) can do but were clearly not designed to do, you might find it far more efficient to seek out the right tool for the right job.

A characteristic of Free/Libre Open Source Software applications is that very few attempt to be everything to everyone. In fact, a basic tenet of FLOSS, handed down from Unix, an historically easy operating system for which to create custom applications, is that of modularity. This idea is commonly expressed in the mantra "do one thing and do it well."

This means that FLOSS tends to focus on individual tasks that can then be strung together. Does this sound like the great beginning of a formidable personalized workflow? It is.

Proprietary graphics applications lull users into believing they can do everything, but in reality they do one general set of tasks well and offer heavily pared-down tools for everything else. For instance, a bitmap graphic manipulation software might offer some basic page layout and vector drawing features. The theory, presumably, is that if a user only needs a few basic vector illustration or page layout tools, then those tools will be available. In practise, however, artists become so familiar with this monolithic application that they start using it for everything, cobbling and hacking together entire pieces with one wrong tool. While this does get work produced (a result that is always difficult to argue with), it often does so after far too much unnecessary pain, too many workarounds and speed bumps.

FLOSS software encourages people to use the tools that are designed for the job. In so doing, the artist is freed to use anything he wants to use. Whatever application an artist finds easiest and most suitable for his art, he is free to use, from the most complex vector drawing program to the most basic paint program. Since FLOSS is dedicated to interoperability, there aren't as many format problems; the work done in one application can be imported and modified in another. No separate, fancy, confusing bridge application necessary.

In a way, this means an artist might need to learn more applications. Most people find that while learning FLOSS applications, there is enough internal logic to that application that the learning curve is modest. And certainly the fact that the application is designed to do the task being done helps a lot. There's no hacking around the fact that an application doesn't do the normal things it should do.

—If you find yourself doing repetitious tasks by hand, again and again throughout a project, then there may be something designed to take that burden from you.

This idea springs up in many different places within the FLOSS world. Since none of the code in FLOSS applications is hidden, scripting these applications is quite simple if you have even

modest scripting skills. However, some people have no scripting skills and don't want them - and for them, there is the Internet. Simple searches uncover myriad scripts to do repetitious tasks with command line applications.

The Image Magick suite, for example, which itself consists of a number of command line tools is one of those applications that no graphic artist should ever be without -- regardless of preferred os.

Now, it often puzzles people to think of graphic work being done from a command line, but it is amazingly useful and flexible. Graphic artists using propriety software might spend an afternoon opening a graphic in a big bulky graphics application just to convert its colourspace. Artists using Image Magick, on the other hand, can issue a simple line command:

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bash$ convert file.tif -colorspace cmyk fileCMYK.tif
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and have the job finished in moments. Script that and hundreds of files can be done while you're onto the next task.

—If you find yourself consistently being stopped or drastically slowed by the same set of small "quirky" problems on every project you do, then you may need a specialized tool to avert that issue.

Proprietary software typically has two answers to your problems: don't do it, or spend more money to be able to do it. This might apply to a specific file format you want to use, or an effect you want to achieve, or a way of working.

The F/LOSS world is set up differently, because there's no agenda to up-sell you on improved versions of the software and no need to limit what you can do. New tools are being developed every day to meet the demands of artists, and these tools are all free to

download and use. All Free/Libre Open Source Software, by the very nature of having free source code, is extensible and expandable. As new tools are released, they can be integrated into the applications you use.

Do one thing and do it well.

DESIGNING F/LOSS WORKFLOWS

Whether or not you have an existing workflow based on proprietary software, working on F/LOSS for multimedia is most efficient with a little planning. Without stepping back and looking at the whole project, it's quite likely that you'll reach a critical point and realize you're not prepared for the next step - or even aware of what your next step should be.

The first step in designing your workflow is to identify what raw materials you'll need for production. If you're doing a digital painting, you might want to go out and find brushes and establish a custom color palette. If your work is graphic manipulation, then you might want to find useful textures, patterns, brushes, fonts, stock images, and so on. If your work is a magazine then you'll need articles, images, and fonts.

Having this kind of kit before starting will make the project flow more smoothly during the creation phase. Some proprietary software comes pre-packaged with gigabytes and gigabytes of royalty-free stock content which, among other things, takes up quite a bit of room on your hard drive, mostly will never be used by you, and is stylistically quite identifiable as the corporate, royalty-free stock content that it is. F/LOSS does not ship with this, so you'll have to find your own, but with Creative Commons being the force that it is, this is a trivial matter and one that, in the end, produces a more unique work than the alternative.

A good place to start is the so-called "Great Multimedia Sprint" from <http://slackermedia.info/sprints>. This is a nearly 2GB

collection of Creative Commons licensed content meant to be used as raw materials. More sprints are scheduled for the future, so more content will be available soon.

The next step is to determine what software tasks and compatibility your project requires. If you're working on a magazine, for instance, then you're sure to need both bitmap and vector manipulation programs, a host of fonts and some way to organize and track them, as well as a good layout program. If you're not already familiar with the tools that f/LOSS has to offer for these tasks, investigate and try some of them to determine which one you prefer and which one will actually do the tasks you want to accomplish.

Since you'll potentially be able to break up tasks into smaller applications, you might also want to consider how multiple computers might be put to work for your project. In the studio where I work, an old G4 running Debian Linux has been repurposed with the solitary job of converting music files from one format to another while a G5 converts still frames to video. They aren't the fastest computers, they don't have so much as a monitor connected to them, but they can run these dedicated tasks all day and all night, so that the materials are available when needed.

In the end you should be able to trace in a flow-chart how the work will get done. A graphic might first be converted and scaled with one application, manipulated and customized in another, and laid out in the final work in yet another. Exporting should, as often as possible, be done at maximum quality to result in a "gold master," which can then be modified and compressed into easily-distributed versions. Again, this can easily be done with dedicated line commands that specialize in compressing (Image Magick for graphics including PDFs, pdftk for PDF modification, FFmpeg for video, and so on).

Proprietary software typically has two answers to your problems: don't do it, or spend more money to be able to do it. This might apply to a specific file format you want to use, or an effect you want to achieve, or a way of working.

THE WAY FREEDOM WORKS

The bottom line is that the workflow in f/LOSS is not predetermined for the artist. While this places the burden of designing a workflow upon the artist, it also frees the artist from a locked-down, inefficient art creation process, and opens a world of possibilities and creativity. And that's something worth working for.

On being a Unicorn: the case for user-involvement in Free/Libre Open Source Software

As an artist or designer (or both), you use a range of tools in your everyday work. Even though it's not something you think about, you may be contributing to the growth of these tools without realising. Every time an application crashes and you hit the button, giving permission for it to report, you're contributing a little something. But, if you're interested, there's more. And there's more you can get out of it than just reliable software.

Let's assume that you think of yourself exclusively as a user of design tools. In the same way you don't offer suggestions to the company manufacturing your pencils, you don't consider letting the people making your software know what you think.

And you know what? You're not alone. Not many designers let the people behind their favourite tools know what they think. It's not common for designers and artists to make their voices heard, but it is useful.

Because, you see, it works this way: if you use F/LOSS graphics software, standards and methods in your art or design practice, chances are good you have something interesting to talk to developers about. What you have to talk to them about is the way you use their software. And they want to hear it.

They want the gory details about which specific tools and commands you use, what problems you have, why you use the things you use in your workflow.

There are lots of different opportunities to have these conversations. The one we're going to suggest right now is Libre Graphics Meeting, an annual meet-up of developers and users. The one thing tying everyone together is an interest in F/LOSS graphics. We want to let you know, as a little service to you, the designer or artist using extensively or even just dabbling with F/LOSS graphics software, standards and tools, that it's coming up.

We want to let you know because, as a designer or artist using F/LOSS, you're a bit of a unicorn. By which we mean that you're something kind of rare and beautiful, not often seen by F/LOSS developers, and perhaps even misunderstood. And as something a little out of the ordinary, you're interesting. You've got lots to contribute, so consider joining in with the spirit of the community a little and bringing your own expertise to the table.

The sixth annual Libre Graphics Meeting is taking place May 10-13 2011 in Montreal. More information is available at libregraphicsmeeting.org

Talking about our tools

Call for submissions

Let's talk about tools for a moment. We, as humans, distinguish ourselves from other animals by talking about our ability to make and use tools. We make tools, we use tools, we are tools, all at different times and in different amounts.

Tools can be physical things used to manipulate equally physical things. At the same time, they can be digital things, used to shift bits. We can love them or hate them. The one thing we can't manage is to escape them.

As we define what they do, so too do they define what we do. In the shape of a paint brush, the kink of a bezier curve, the change a gaussian filter exerts over an image, they make our work what it is. We are our tools and our tools are us. So let's talk about tools, in the best way we know how, graphically.

Libre Graphics Meeting, Libre Graphics magazine and Mardigrafe are co-sponsoring a juried exhibition of f/LOSS graphics work on the subject of tools. Break out your own f/LOSS graphics tools and design a poster (24"x34") detailing your perception or ideas about tools.

All submissions will be included in an online gallery, presented in conjunction with Libre Graphics meeting. In addition, a jury of designers, thinkers and doers will meet in May. They'll pick 15 posters to be printed by Mardigrafe and displayed during Libre Graphics Meeting in Montreal. The editors of Libre Graphics magazine will pick a further eight to be featured in the showcase section of an upcoming issue.

So get thinking about your tools, what they mean to you and what you mean to them. Then, get designing.

More details and how to submit at [HTTP://LIBREGRAPHICSMAG.COM/TOOLS](http://LIBREGRAPHICSMAG.COM/TOOLS)