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When discussing the pros and cons of Ubuntu, or any operating system, it is worth considering the perspective of the user. What might be considered a pro for one end-user could be a con to another. What someone might see as a major quality-of-life improvement could be a major compromise to someone else. With that said, let us consider Ubuntu first from the perspective of a newcomer to Linux.
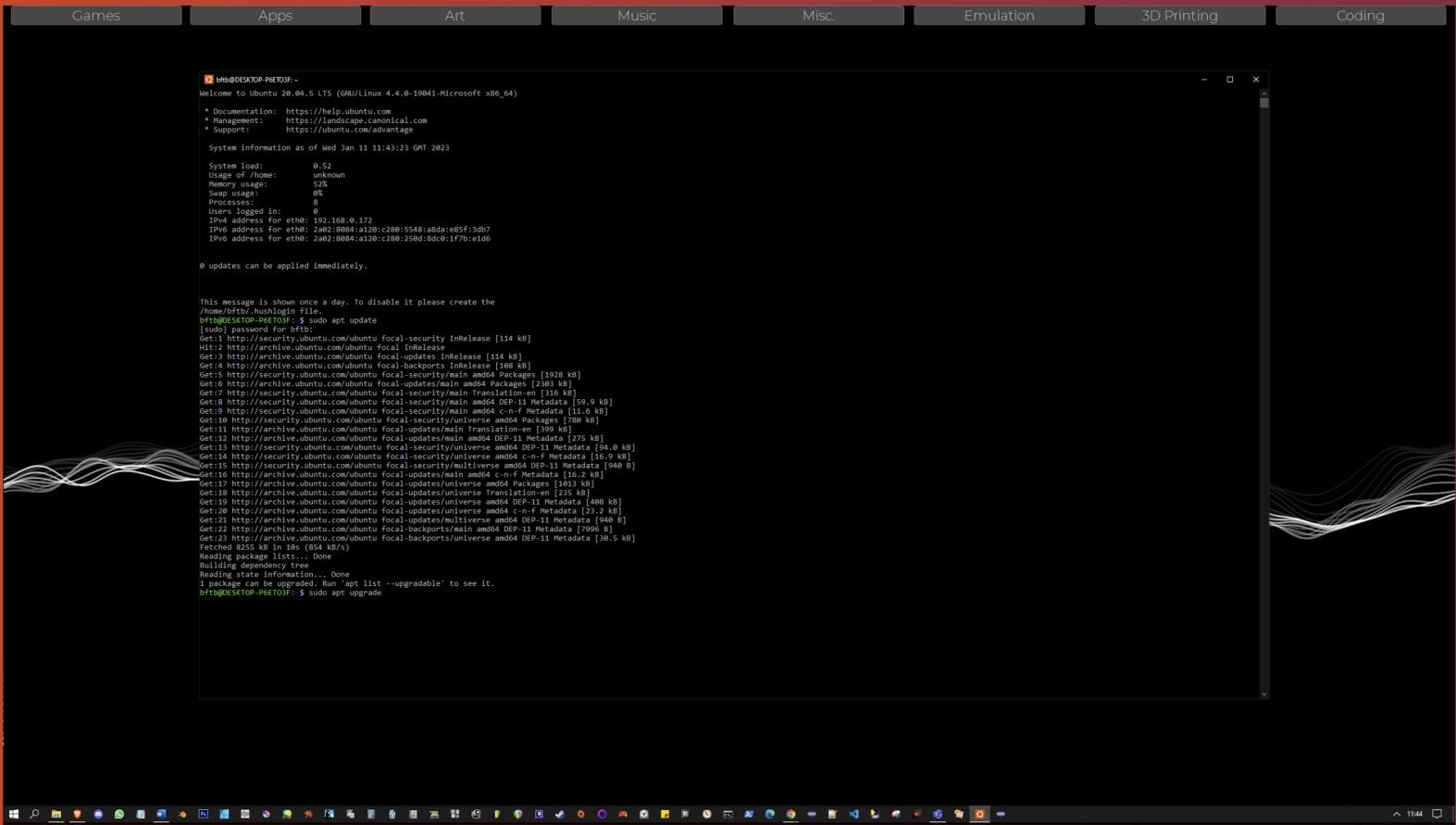

Images on this page are screenshots of Ubuntu in use on my personal computer using WSL (Initialising, updating, upgrading and an installation in progress).

As mentioned in the history of Ubuntu page, a guiding principle of the early development of Ubuntu was accessibility. Linux was not well known among consumers outside the tech industry, and the learning curve associated with adoption at this time would certainly be enough to put off potential users. In truth, even today Linux is associated with a degree of upskilling, where it is often essentially assumed that a new user will be familiar with the layout and conventions of operating systems like Windows and MacOS in short order, and the same is even more true of mobile operating systems like Android or iOS (Diguez-Castro 2016, Helmke 2021, Wikipedia 2022).

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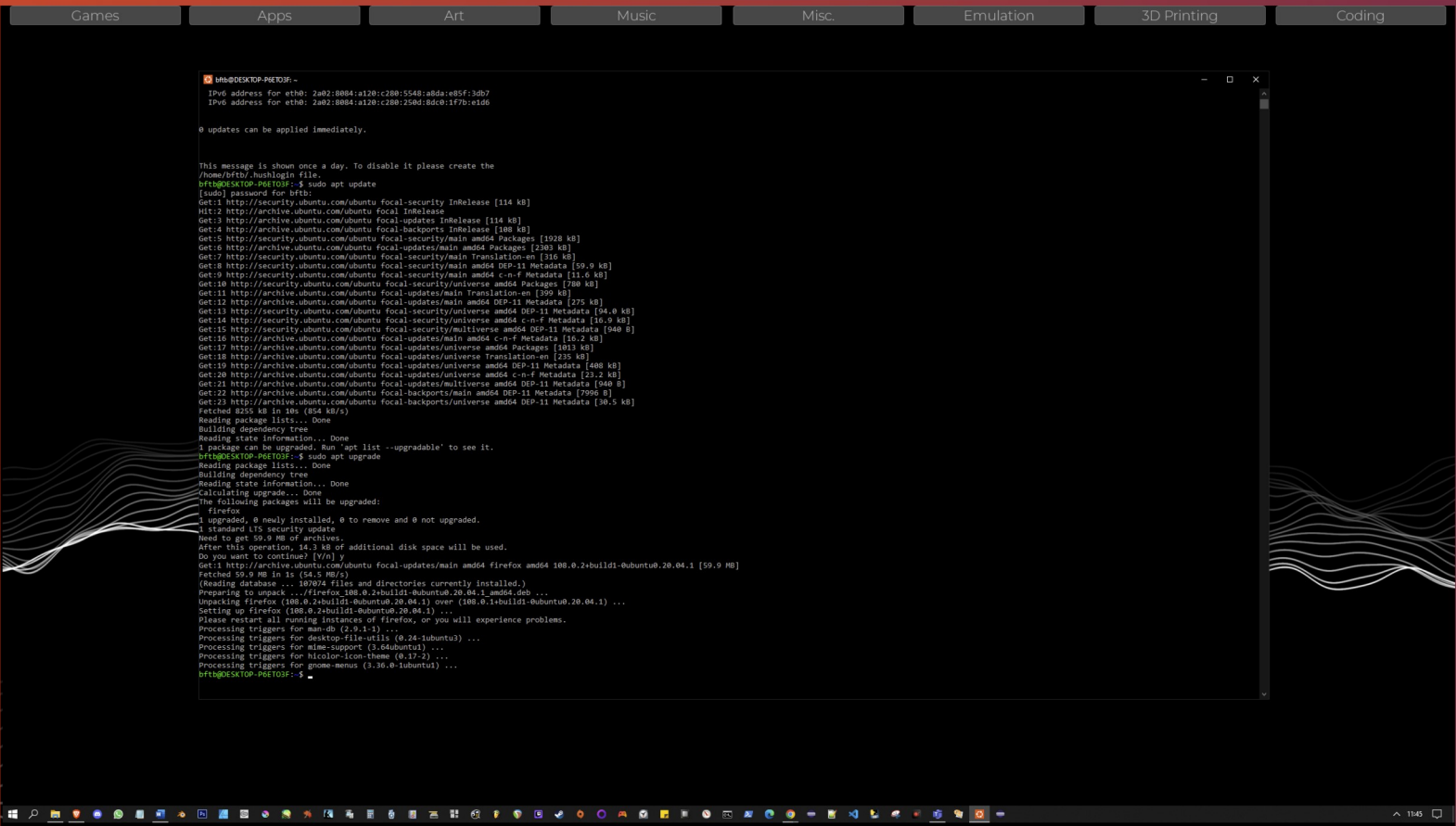Ubuntu – Unique Features

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Bearing that in mind, the streamlining and refinement of operating systems like Ubuntu, and more recently Linux Mint, has done a lot to foster a larger user base. Ubuntu's impressive growth in it's early years is most likely thanks in large part to it's efforts to offer ease of installation and access. New customers were not obliged to engage with the OS on a deeper level than they needed, and the overall environment was curated to facilitate this. In this sense, accessibility and simplification is a pro of Ubuntu for new users (Diguez-Castro 2016, Helmke 2021).
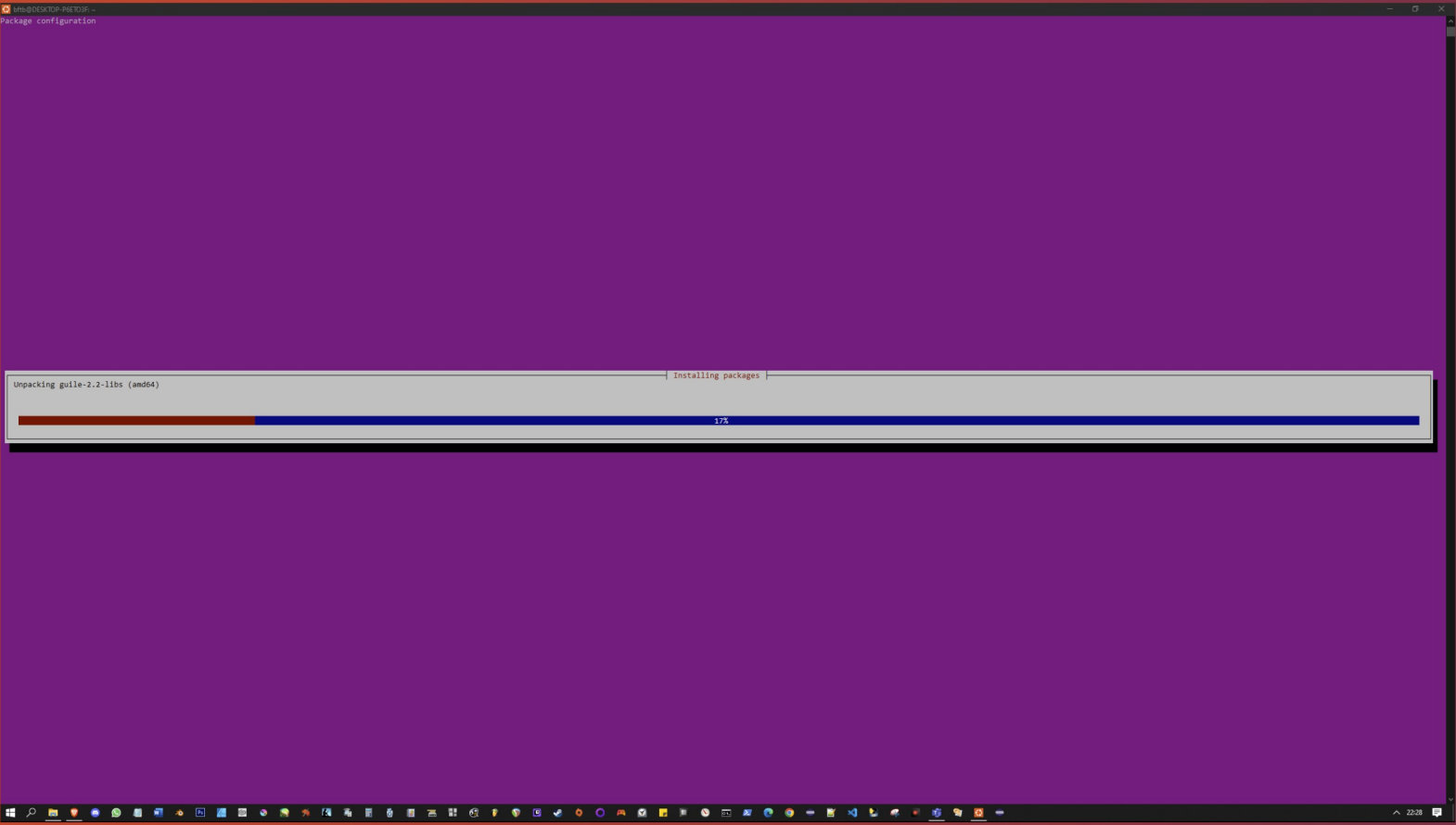
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However, the same cannot be said for users who had already been exposed to earlier forms of Linux. Many of these users had engaged with Linux because it was more adjustable, by design it was easier to access the "under-the-hood" elements of the OS. To these users, the refined installation and setup process is more a con than a pro. They are accustomed to having total control, and when decisions are enforced by an OS or it's parent company, they can feel alienated by that (Diguez-Castro 2016).

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One example of such a con, in the eyes of traditionalists, was Ubuntu's use of Snaps and the Snap Store, a facility for packaging and distributing software along with it's dependencies for ease of installation and use. A similar technology is found in the popular alternative Flatpak and their Flathub. The inclusion of Snaps and the Snap Store in Ubuntu was met with criticism for being at odds with the open-source and decentralisation ethos of Linux and to some represented a move in the direction of Windows or MacOS. Although Flatpak is also available on Ubuntu, the sentiment seemed to be the main issue for purists (LorenDB 2020, Flatpak n.d.).

Another example of an aspect of Ubuntu that could be considered a pro or con depending on one's viewpoint is their connection to Canonical, their parent company. The resources and industry connections of an influential company like Canonical would appear to be a net positive for a new OS, and in many ways it was. However, again, criticism was levied at the company by long-time users who saw Canonical as the Linux equivalent of Microsoft, and antithetical to the DIY attitude promoted by Linux (Diguez-Castro 2016, Wikipedia 2022).

Furthermore, we can examine the pros and cons of Ubuntu with relation to the IT industry. As mentioned in the Market Share page of this project, Ubuntu is free to install and, with the significant resources of Canonical to back it up, provides 24/7 support. These support tiers are paid, naturally, but the same level of support cannot be expected from distributions without the financial stability to provide such a service and pay a workforce to maintain it. This is a significant pro for Linux and Ubuntu over Windows and MacOS, and the figures, found on the Market Share page, reflect this (Diguez-Castro 2016, Helmke 2021, Wikipedia 2022).

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