

# Lindows 4.0 (2003)

There once was a time when desktop adoption was seen as the most important goal for Linux. Since then, Linux has come to dominate the market of supercomputers, web servers, mobile devices, network devices, and IoT, but most desktop computers are still running Windows. While there are millions of Linux desktops, it's still a minority. Sure, Linux has succeeded, but not in a way people in the early 2000's had anticipated.

A certain category of people thought the best way to gain desktop adoption was to mimic Microsoft Windows as much as possible. Sometimes it took benign forms, such as making Windows-like themes for window managers, but sometimes it took it to the extreme.

And then there was Lindows... The distribution that failed to gain any popularity with either Windows users or free software advocates. For Windows users, it was not a drop-in replacement because not one OS in the world can be a drop-in replacement for another. For free software advocates, it was a blatant disregard of free software ideals because it mixed free and proprietary software arbitrarily.

Its name was an obvious lawsuit magnet, and it sure [happened](#), but the lawsuit was settled out of court and apparently got the project developers \$20M, which didn't seem to help it much. It was since then renamed to Linspire/Freespire, sold to different companies multiple times, and is now owned by PC/OpenSystems LLC. Freespire looks like yet another Ubuntu derivative to me, though I haven't looked deep. Linspire costs at least \$80 and I'm not \$80 interested in it. In any case, that distro has little if anything in common with the original Lindows, and should not be judged by this review!

In this review we are going to take a look at the last release actually named "Lindows", version 4.0 from 2003. I've heard of it at the time, but never tried it because I thought it was ridiculous. Let's see if my judgement was correct.

Installation images are available from [WinWorldPC](#) (its team is doing a great work keeping old OSes available!). It boots in VirtualBox with standard Linux 2.4 setup just fine (PIIX3 chipset, IDE drives, PCNet NIC). We are met with a custom graphical bootloader:

- 1. Install**
- 2. Diagnostics**



The installer loads and offers two options, to use the entire drive, or to setup partitions by hand.

## Installation Method

Select one of the below methods for installing LindowsOS:

- TAKE OVER AN ENTIRE HARD DISK

This method overwrites and installs LindowsOS on an entire hard drive, wiping out ALL existing files on that drive. This method provides the best performance and easiest installation for LindowsOS. **IMPORTANT! THIS OPTION WILL DELETE ALL EXISTING FILES ON THE HARD DRIVE!** (If your computer has multiple hard drives, you will be asked in the next step to specify which drive to install LindowsOS on.)

- ADVANCED INSTALL

This method is for advanced users and allows you to overwrite and install LindowsOS on a specified, pre-configured partition, wiping out all existing files on that partition. **IMPORTANT! THIS OPTION WILL DELETE ALL EXISTING FILES ON THE PARTITION SELECTED!** (If your computer has multiple hard drives and/or partitions, you will be asked in the next step to specify which drive/partition to install LindowsOS on.)

## Install Methods

Based on what the installation program detects for your computer, it will default the Installation Method to the most likely choice. However, please READ THESE OPTIONS CAREFULLY and choose the installation method that is right for you. After selecting the Next button, you will be presented with additional options before the Installation begins.

< Back

Next >

Cancel

Naturally, I picked the latter option, but the first surprise was lurking there:

## Advanced Install

The install program has detected more than one Disk or Disk Partition. Please select the Disk or Partition that you want to install LindowsOS on.

Disk Information:

Disk / Partition	File System	Size (MB)	Usable
IDE 1: VBOX HARDDISK		4096	yes

 - Hard Disk  - Partition

Warning: All contents of the selected Disk or Partition will be lost when you complete this install process and the Disk Partition is formatted...

### Take Over Entire Hard Disk

The install program has detected that you have more than one hard disk. You must select the disk that you want to install LindowsOS on by highlighting its entry in the list and clicking Next.

< Back

Next >

Cancel

That's right, you can only pick a drive or a partition from a list. There is no functionality for creating or editing partitions unlike in most other distros from any era, so the only way one could possibly install it alongside another OS would be to create partitions beforehand. I didn't check if it was capable of detecting Windows installations and setting up the bootloader accordingly.

Another surprise awaits at the next screen:

## Computer Name

Name for this Computer:  (Required)

## Password

Security Password:  (Optional)

Confirm Password:

IMPORTANT NOTE! If you choose to use a password, please be sure to remember it! Should you forget your password, there is no way for Lindows.com to recover it.

## Computer Name

You must give your computer a name. Examples: johndoe, sally, frontdesk, accounting5, etc. (This is the name your computer will be known by on networks.)

## Password

Although not required, for maximum security and to protect your computer from unauthorized access, it is recommended that you use a password with your computer. If you would like a password for this computer, enter it here before clicking Next to continue.

< Back

Next >

Cancel

The hostname option is fine. The password though... which user's password are we asked for? The root password? Well, we have an option to add a non-root user?

## Setup Confirmation

LindowsOS will now be installed on your computer using the following settings.

**Installation Method:** Take Over Entire Hard Disk

**Computer Name:** lindows

### Confirmation

Setup Confirmation shows a summary of the selections you made in the LindowsOS Setup. If any of these selections are incorrect, you can return to any specific step using the Back button.

If the selections shown are correct, click Next to start the installation process.

< Back

Next >

Cancel

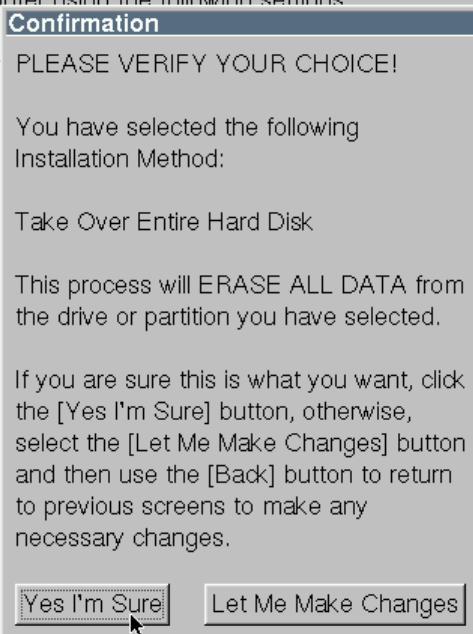
Uhm, no. The next screen just asks to confirm the settings.

## Setup Confirmation

LindowsOS will now be installed on your computer using the following settings

**Installation Method:** Take Over Entire Hard Disk

**Computer Name:** lindows



## Confirmation

Setup Confirmation shows a summary of the selections you made in the LindowsOS Setup. If any of these selections are incorrect, you can return to any specific step using the Back button.

If the selections shown are correct, click Next to start the installation process.

< Back    Next >    Cancel

All we can do is to click "Yes" and watch the progress bar.



## Installing LindowsOS

Installing Base System

**Installation Method:** Take Over Entire Hard Disk

**Computer Name:** lindows

Installation Progress:

37%



### *Internet*

LindowsOS includes all the software you'll need to quickly connect to the Internet. Pre-installed is an easy-to-use web browser and e-mail program. Additional software can be added at any time with just the click of a mouse, using LindowsOS' Click-N-Run technology.



< Back

Next >

Cancel

It looks like an obvious Windows XP installer clone with a different layout. At least it's not saying "Try the easiest Lindows® yet!"

The next screen is advertising Click'n'Run, the package manager. Frankly, at the time the idea of installing packages from a remote server was still relatively new, though graphical frontends for package managers already existed. Lindows Click'n'Run promised a one stop shop for everything including proprietary software.

## Installing LindowsOS

Configuring Runtime System...

**Installation Method:** Take Over Entire Hard Disk

**Computer Name:** lindows

Installation Progress:

100%



### **Click-N-Run™**

LindowsOS allows you to install new software with literally one-click of your mouse. Rather than the traditional costs and installation hassles (downloading, uncompressing, installing, etc.), with Click-N-Run everything is performed automatically and seamlessly.



< Back

Next >

Cancel

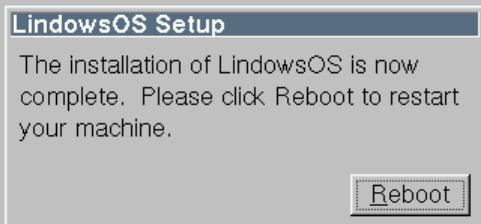
Installation is now complete and we can reboot the machine.

## Installing LindowsOS

Installation Complete.

**Installation Method:** Take Over Entire Hard Disk

**Computer Name:** lindows



Installation Progress:

100%



### ***The Click-N-Run Warehouse***

Browse the Lindows.com Click-N-Run Warehouse to find hundreds of software titles. For each title, you'll find screen shots, descriptions, specifications, pricing, and comparisons. When you find an application you are interested in, simply select the Click-N-Run button and the software is automatically downloaded and installed on your LindowsOS computer.

< Back

Next >

Cancel

***Installation complete***

***Please remove CD  
and hit any key***



By the time installation was complete, I also realized that it didn't offer to choose the interface language, even though many other distros already had that option by the time.

The machine reboots, and we are met by the same graphical bootloader as in the live CD:

- [1. LindowsOS](#)
- [2. Diagnostics](#)



Hitting the Escape key does nothing. There's no way to see the boot messages during normal boot. Then again, Plymouth didn't exist at the time, there was no standard graphical boot program yet, and everyone who wanted one had to invent their own.

Starting LindowsOS

Please wait...



All we can do is to watch the progress bar. When it boots, we are at the login screen... with no username field!



**LindowsOS**

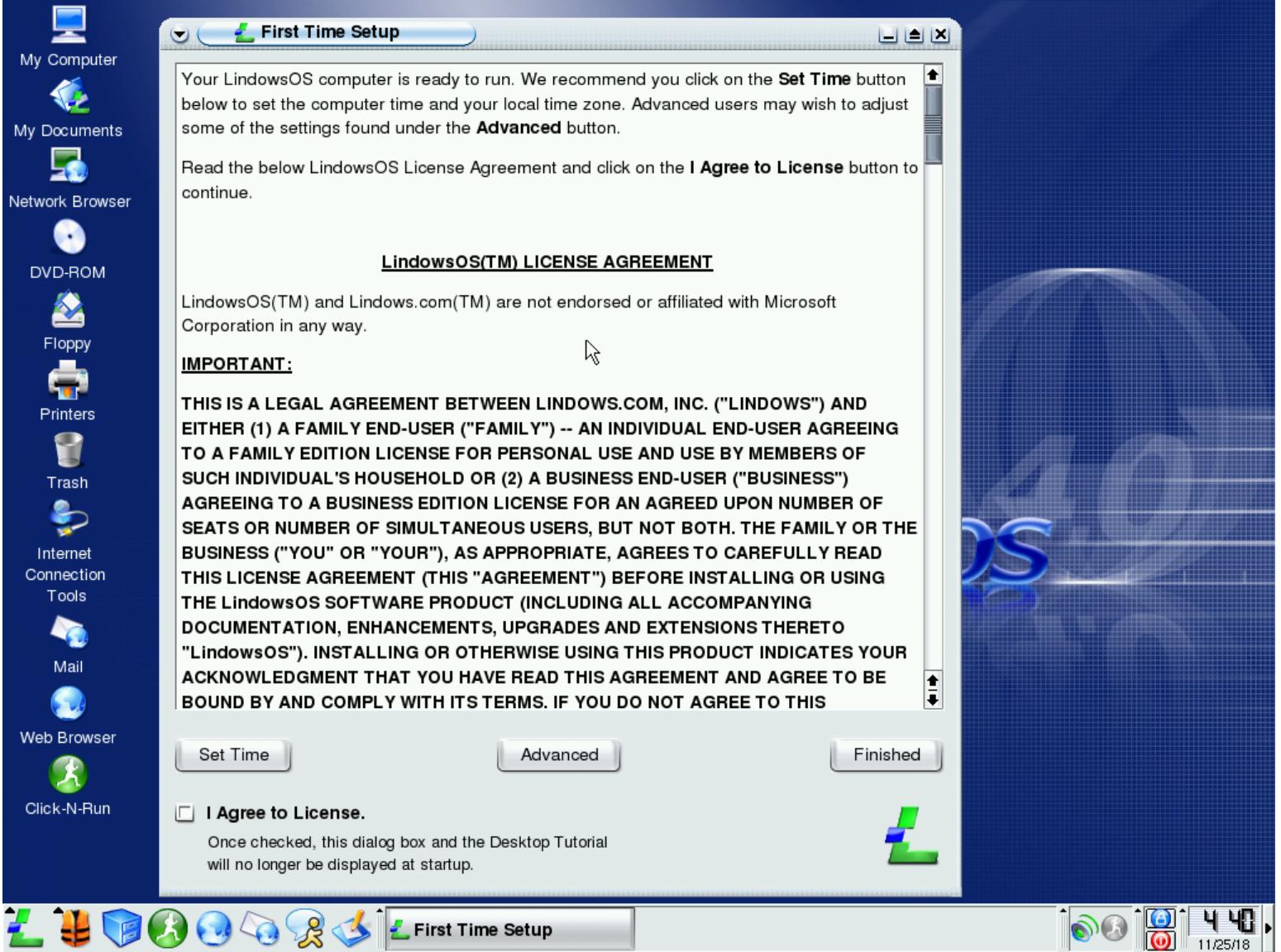
You mean, seriously? What user are we going to login as? Let's type the password in and see.

Looking at the splash screen, we already know that it's using KDE:



LindowsOS

The first thing we see when it loads is the EULA dialog:



I would have expected to have an option to review the EULA before I let the installer wipe out my hard drive. At least some jurisdictions, installing software may be considered equal to accepting its EULA! The EULA mentioned the Lindows is not affiliated with or endorsed by Microsoft, as if there could be any confusion.

Before we can start doing anything, we are made to watch a tutorial. Windows style again.

# LindowsOS Desktop Tutorial

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E

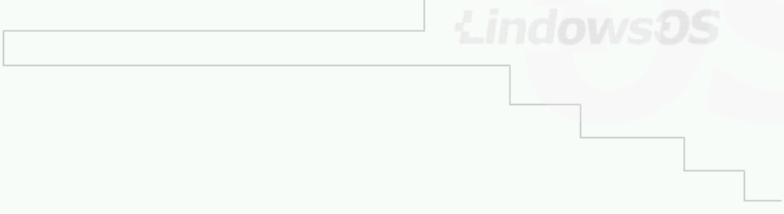
Restart Tutorial at Beginning

Skip Intro and Start Tutorial



Exit DesktopTutorial

Welcome to the world of LindowsOS,  
a new, fun and exciting operating  
system that delivers the power,  
stability and cost savings of Linux  
with the ease of a windows  
environment.

  
LindowsOS

# LindowsOS Desktop Tutorial

-  My Computer
-  My Documents
-  Network Browser
-  CD-ROM
-  Floppy
-  Printers
-  Trash
-  Internet Connection Tools
-  Mail
-  Web Browser
-  Click-N-Run



This page is a replica of the LindowsOS desktop layout. Simply move your mouse over the different parts and icons of the desktop to hear a brief description of the function for each of the different parts.

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[Restart Tutorial at Beginning](#)

[Skip Intro and Start Tutorial](#)



[Exit DesktopTutorial](#)

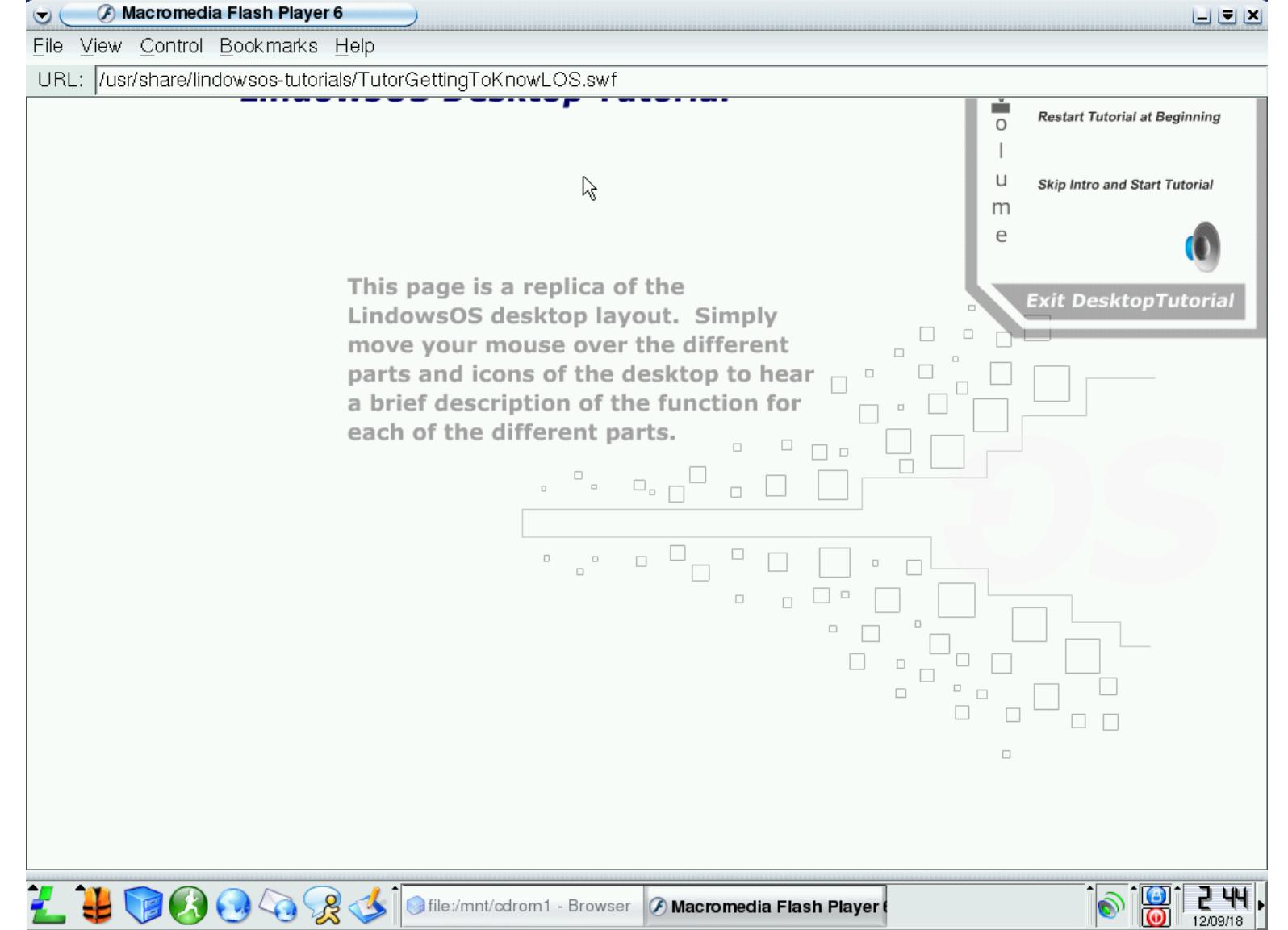
# LindowsOS



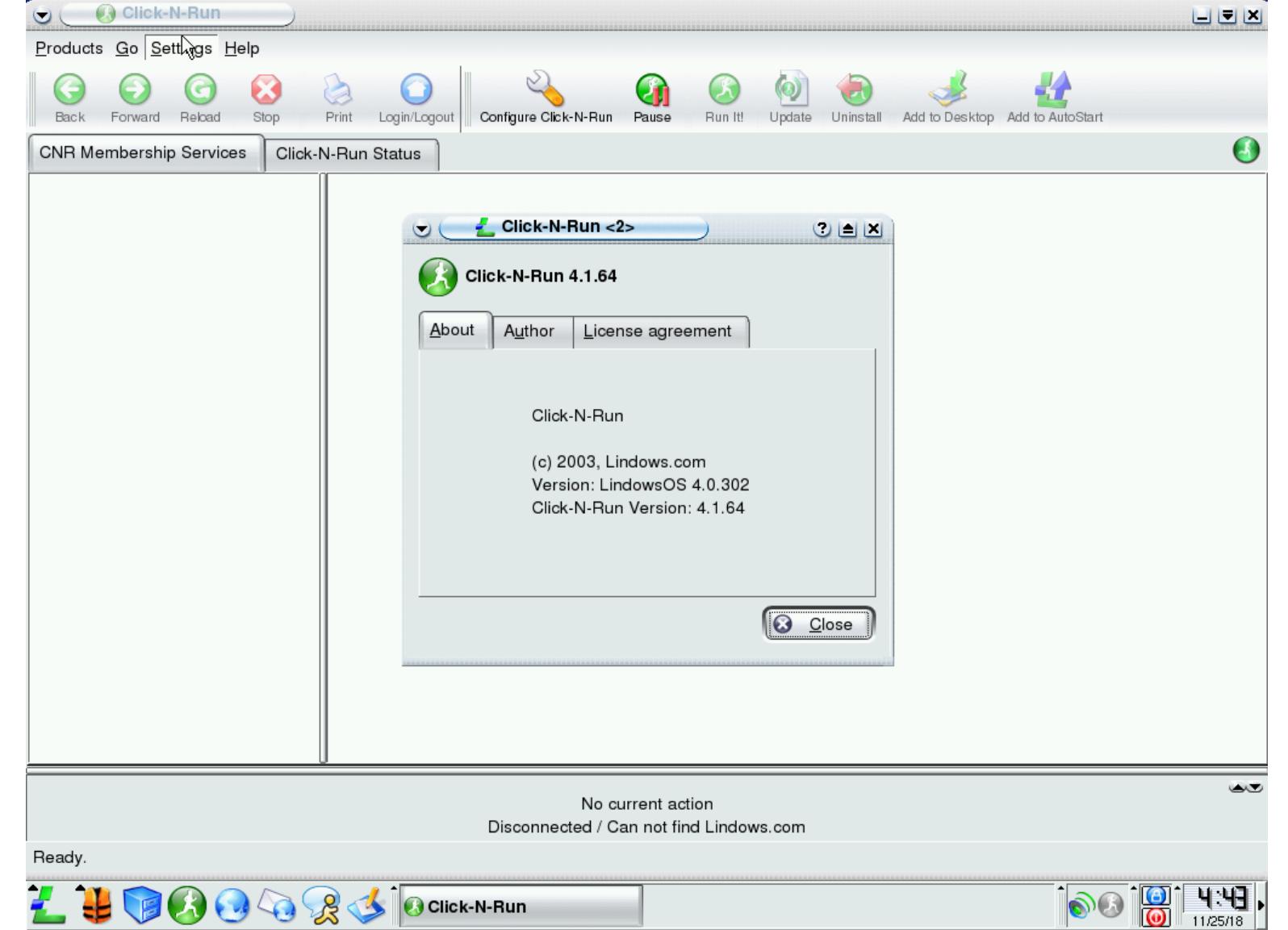
 **Thank you for using this audio tutorial. You will now be returned to the real desktop, where you can start enjoying LindowsOS. To run this tutorial again at anytime, or for other helpful tutorials and support information, simply click on the Life Jacket icon in the lower-left hand corner of the desktop for the LindowsOS Help Center. There you'll find dozens of additional audio tutorials, just like this one, to help you quickly learn all the powerful features of LindowsOS. Also, be sure and try out installing new software to your LindowsOS computer with just one click using Click-N-Run. To start Click-N-Run, simply click on the round green icon with the running man.**

[\*Go to the Real Desktop\*](#)

Exiting the fullscreen mode reveals an ugly truth: the tutorial is Flash-based.



There isn't much software installed by default. In fact, almost nothing is installed by default, the assumption was that everything will be installed via Click'n'Run. All dial-up users were sure grateful (that was 2003, remember!). Click'n'Run package repository servers are no longer available, and clearly wouldn't have packages for a 2003 version in 2018, but let's start Click'n'Run just to see its UI:



Apparently Click'n'Run wasn't mean to handle the situation with inaccessible repository gracefully because a minute later it segfaults:



My Computer



My Documents



Network Browser



DVD-ROM



Floppy



Printers



Trash



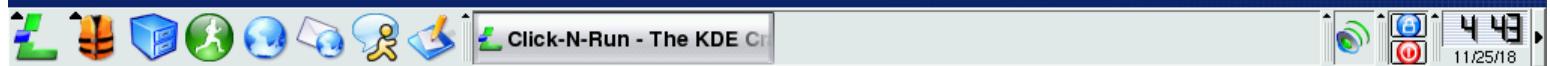
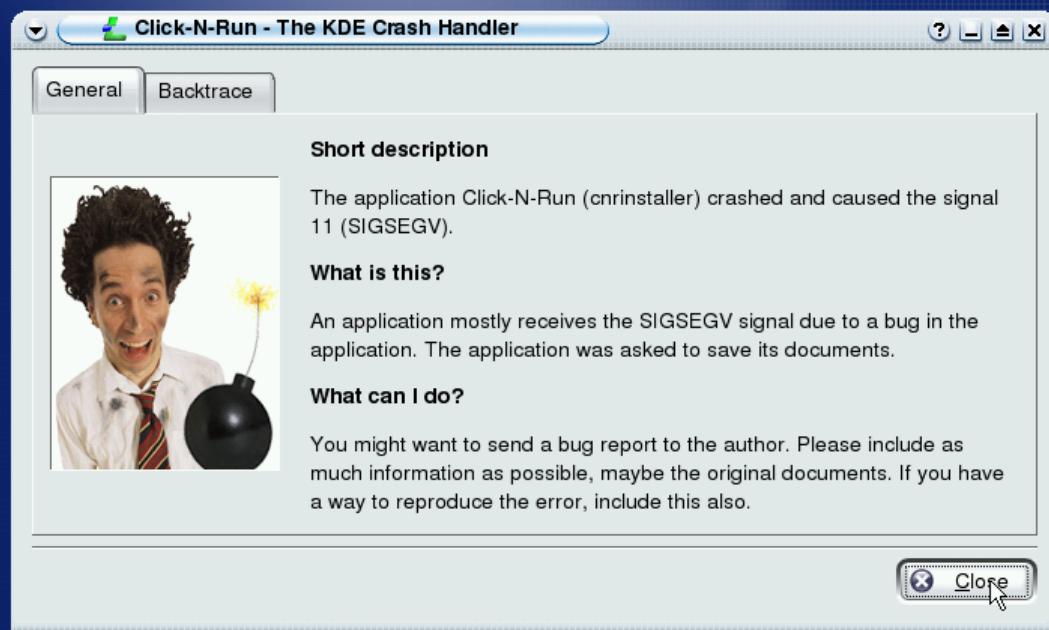
Internet  
Connection  
Tools



Web Browser



Click-N-Run



The menu is made to look as Windows-like as possible. In every section, there's a link to Click'n'Run. How many programs in each category it could actually offer is impossible to find out by now.



Well, now let's check if our worst fears were true. And let's do it the Windows... I mean, Lindows way, and open the Lindows Control Panel (which I think is just a renamed KDE Control Center).

## Main Menu

 File Browsing Look & Feel Network Peripherals Personalization Power Control Sound System Advanced Settings LindowsOS

## Control Panel



The LindowsOS Control Panel allows you to easily customize and configure your desktop environment. Use the menu on the left to select the different setting options.

User: **root**  
Computer Name: **lindows**  
LindowsOS version: **4.0.302**



For help, visit [support.lindows.com](http://support.lindows.com).



Oh yes! The user is root! It uses root login by default, without an option not to do it, without any warning message about possible consequences!

So, what about i18n? There's a country option in the control panel, but it has no effect. There are no locales other than en\_US in the system.

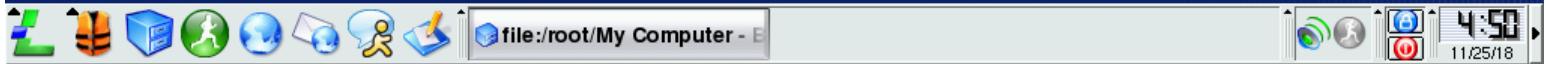
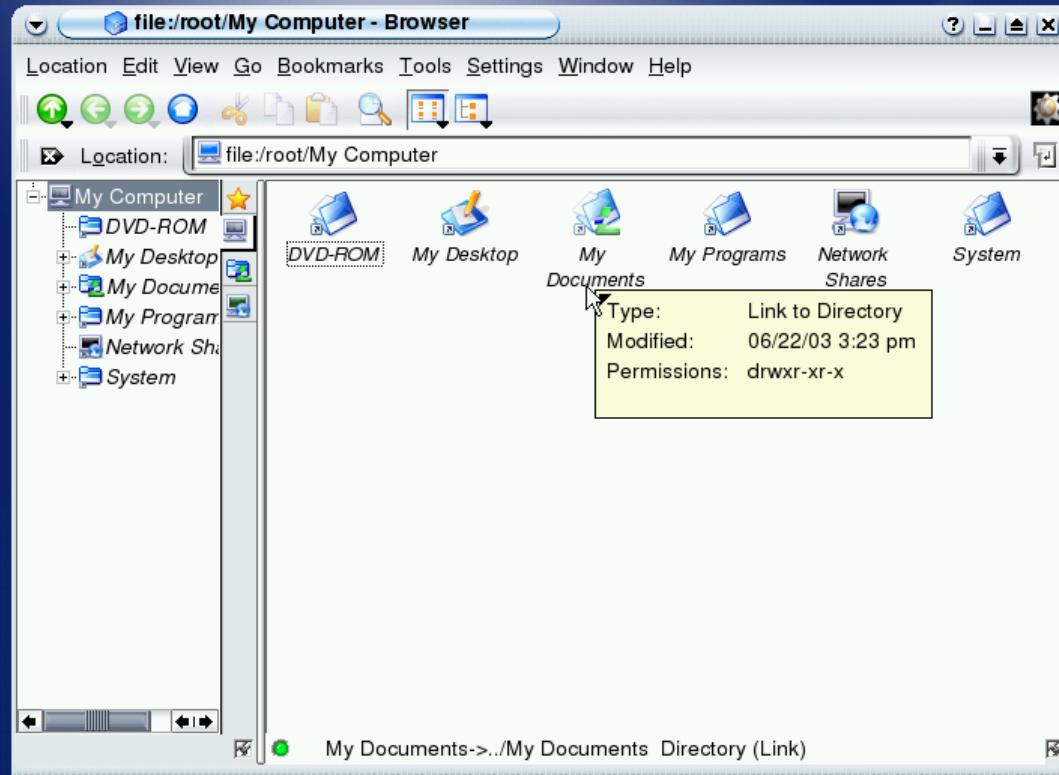
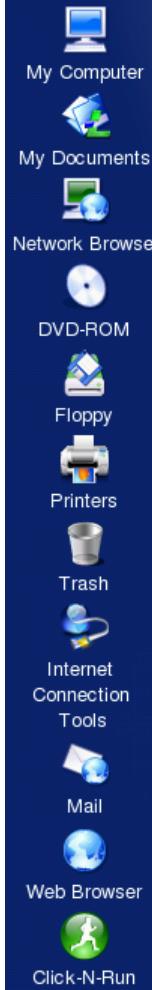
If you create a user, the login manager starts displaying other accounts, though it also renames root to Administrator for some reason. There's also no option to create a user in the control panel, even though a graphical user manager from KDE is installed.

## Welcome to LindowsOS

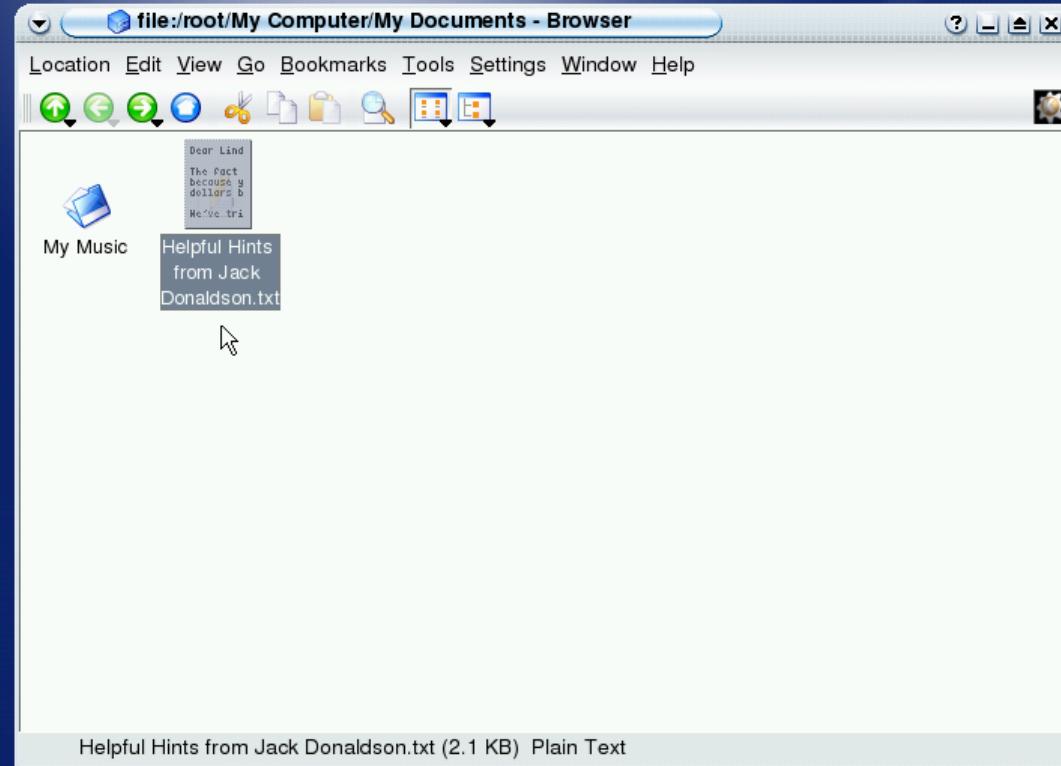


LindowsOS

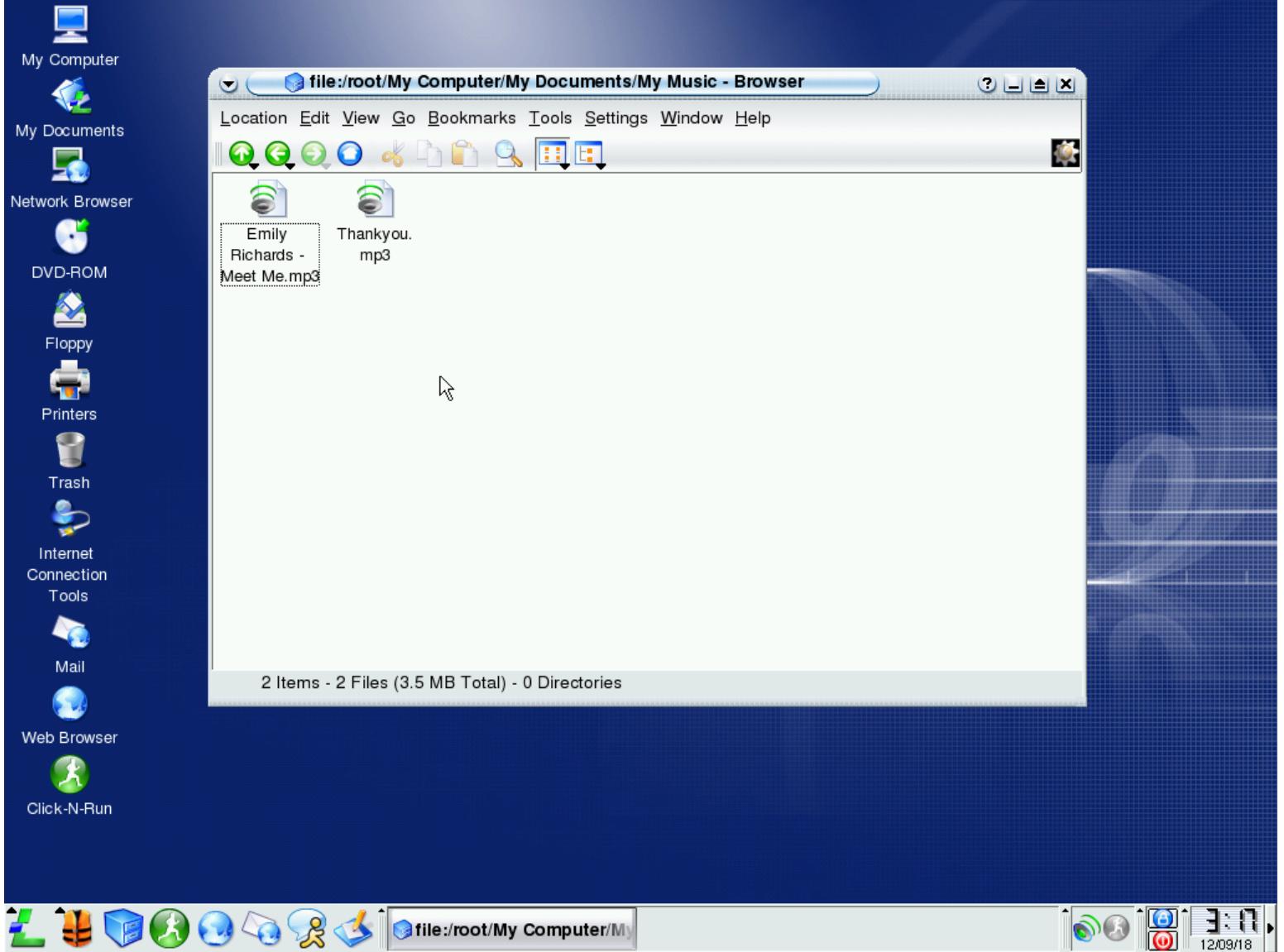
Some Windows-like directories such as “My Documents” are created inside the home dir:



Inside the "My Documents" directory, there are some bonus files. Some music samples and a letter:



This is what's inside the Music directory:



The Thankyou.mp3 simply says “Thanks you for choosing Lindows OS”. The second file is more interesting. It contains the “Meet Me” song from the “Can’t Take It With You” album by Emily Richards. Turns out [Emily Richards](#) releases her music under CC-BY-NC license (non-free, but still). There’s no indication that the song in question is under a free license however, so I wonder if they had a special agreement with her.

And then we find what seems to be a rather personal touch, a letter from Jack Donaldson, an assistant coordinator:

File Edit Bookmarks Tools Settings Help



Dear LindowsOS User,

The fact that you're reading this tells me that you're one smart cookie! Not because you've found this letter, but because you've decided to save hundreds of dollars by computing with Linux and LindowsOS. Isn't LindowsOS fun? =)

We've tried to organize the LindowsOS file structure so that it's easy to get around. It basically looks like this...

- My Computer
  - My Documents
  - My Programs
  - Network Shares
  - System

Let me try to explain what each one of these does...

#### MY DOCUMENTS

Here is where you'll usually want to keep all your personal files, such as letters, spreadsheets, music files, photos, and so on. You can use the LindowsOS File Manager (the file cabinet icon found in the Task Bar of your LindowsOS Desktop) to create sub-folders within this folder. For example, you might want one folder just for your music, one for personal correspondence, another one for work related items, and so on.

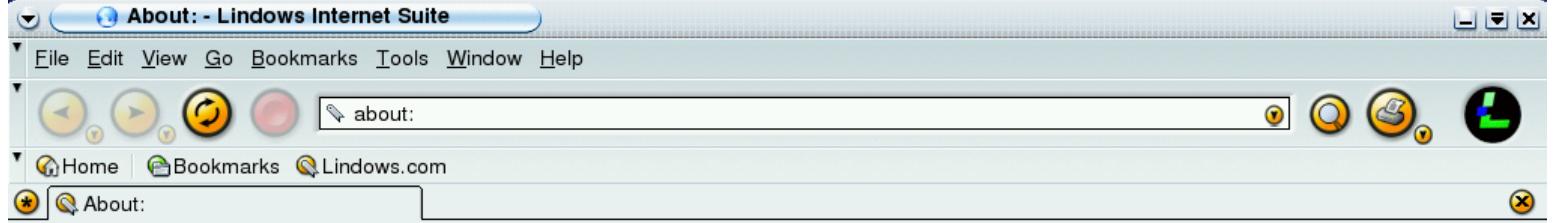
#### MY PROGRAMS

Here you'll find links to some of the applications installed on your computer. Usually you'll start programs from the LindowsOS desktop via the Launch Menu, but this can be a handy way to find programs if you are ever prompted by your computer to let it know which program it should use to open up a particular file. The short cuts are organized in sub-folders that mimic your Launch Menu structure.

Line: 1 Col: 0 INS NORM



There's Mozilla renamed to "Lindows Internet Suite":

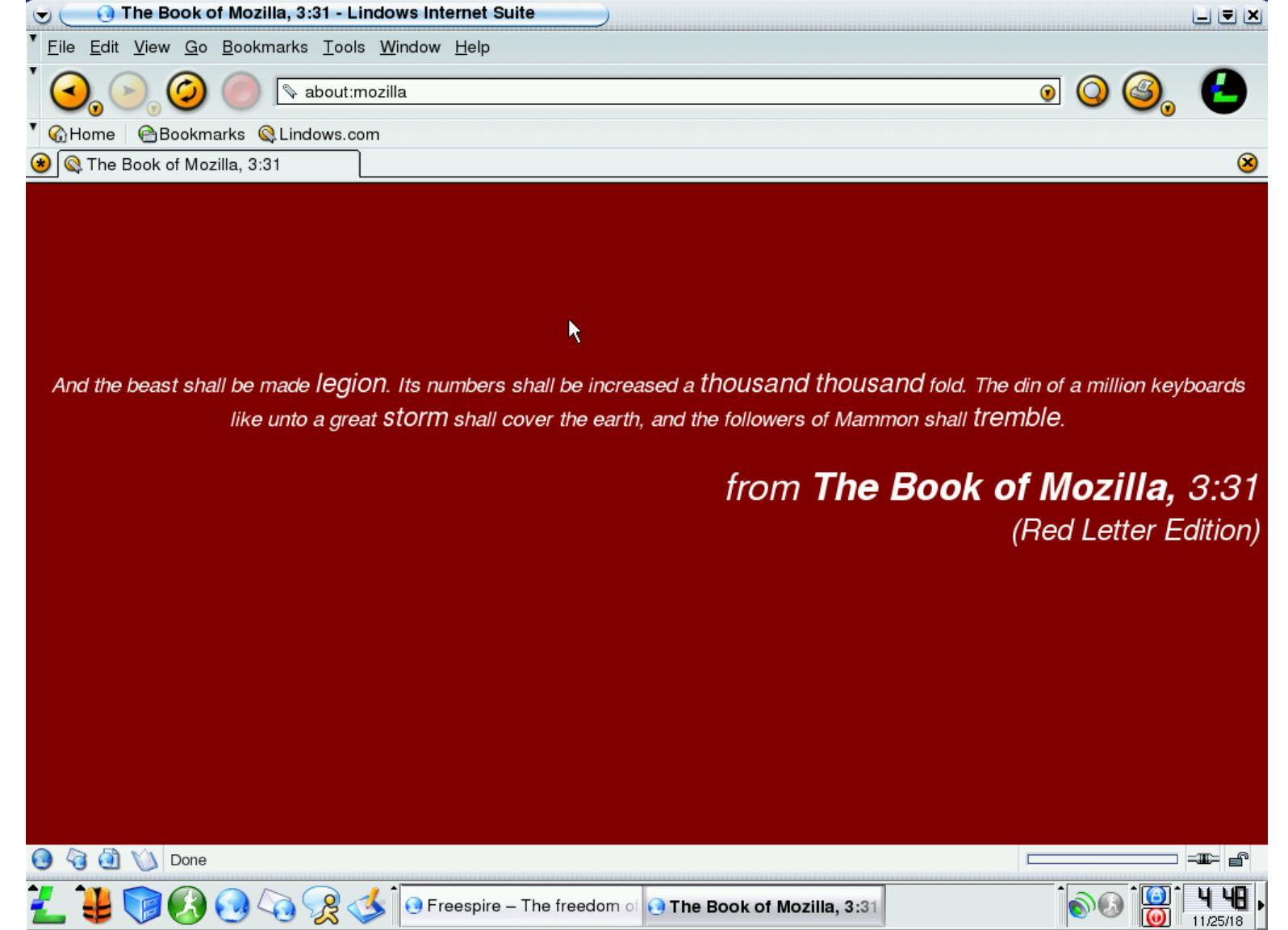


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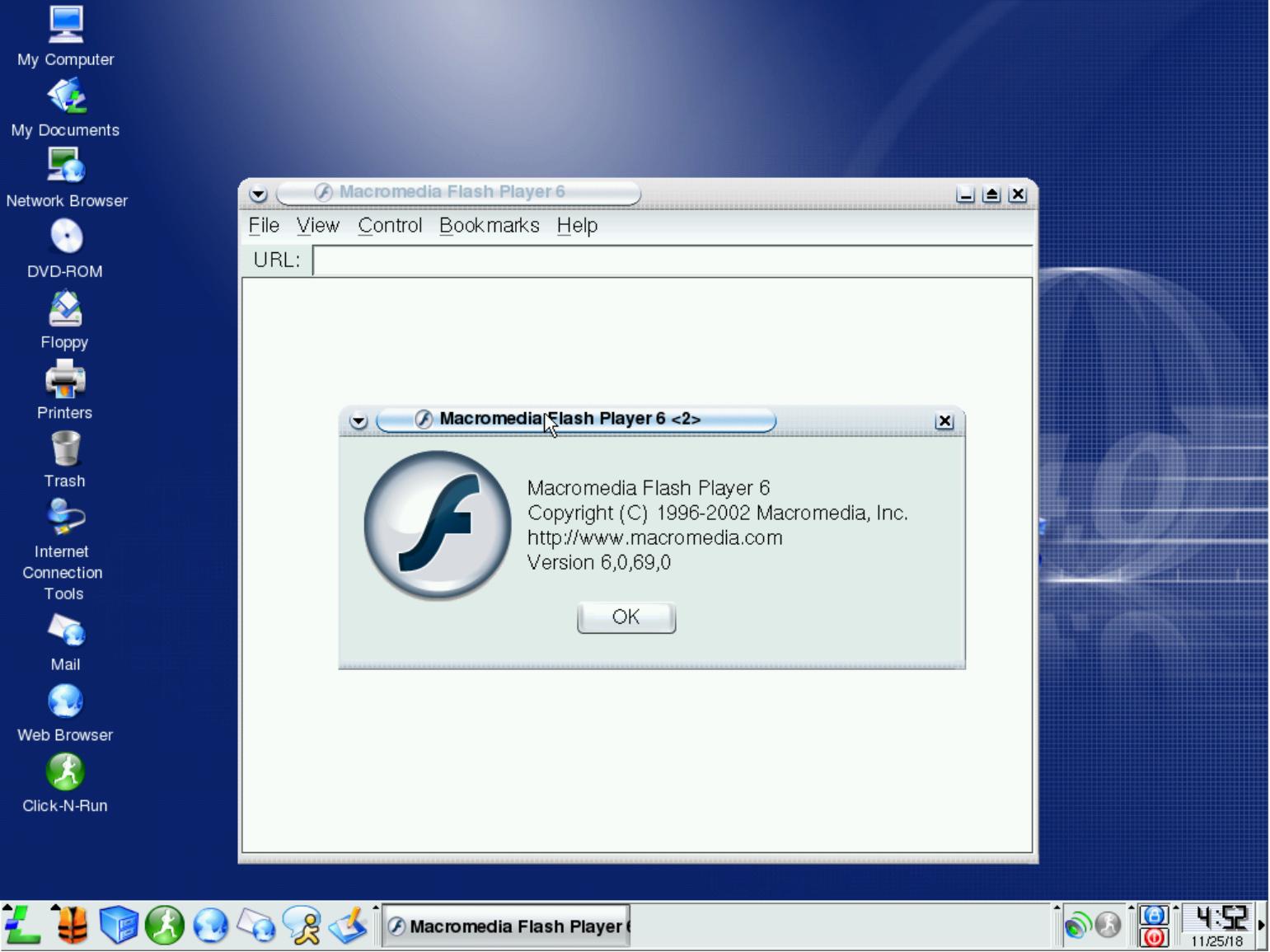
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Of course, the change is very superficial:



One relic from the past that many people may not even remember: it was Macromedia Flash Player back then, not yet Adobe Flash Player.



Other than that, there's not much software to talk about. Out of the box, without working Click'n'Run it doesn't make a complete working environment. Wine isn't installed by default and there's no out of the box integration with Windows binaries, though I think they might have done it in later versions. But, I guess we have seen enough. As we shutdown the machine, we see a custom splash screen again:



***Shutdown  
Complete***

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