

1998's most intriguing OS, 15 years later: Hands-on with Haiku alpha 4

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An OS of yore

Revived and open source freed

Waiting to be used

Haiku is not only a Japanese short poem with a defined structure?it's also the name of an open-source recreation of BeOS, an alternative operating system originally developed in the mid-1990s.

BeOS reached its pinnacle of success in 2000 when the R5 version was released as a free download. However, few people upgraded to the \$99 ?Professional? version, and a last-ditch attempt to save the company by bundling BeOS with the Sony eVilla Internet Appliance failed to bring in the necessary cash.

With the legal status of the BeOS source code in limbo, it was up to an open-source group of hackers to try to recently keep the BeOS dream alive. Their project was originally named OpenBeOS, but trademark issues forced a name change. Haiku was chosen as a callback to the old error messages in BeOS?s built-in Web browser, which were delivered (appropriately) in haiku form. Today, the Haiku group aims not only to rebuild that operating system, but to also run application binaries originally designed for BeOS. With the team recently releasing version R1/Alpha 4.1, Ars decided to take the OS for a test drive.

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