

MEETING THE PANEL

Dear Linux Magazine Reader,



Joe Casad, Editor in Chief

I attended a conference the other day that was quite different from an ordinary IT event. I'm not even sure how I got to it – whether I took a wrong turn, or whether a wrong turn was taken for me through some distillation of the experiential space-time penumbra. In any case, I emerged from a hazy hallway into an inauspicious conference room, where a very peculiar and antagonistic meeting had reached the communi-

cative equivalent of ear wax served on a cracker.

Several strangely dressed participants sat about a semi-circular table. They seemed to be in some form of panel discussion. Their business suits appeared to have been fashioned from burnished aluminum foil, although each was dressed quite differently, and, in fact, each looked quite different – and not just “different” like from a different country, but wholly individual in species, for among them, one could find no unity in the number of lips or eyes or even the position of the nose in regard to any particular axis of symmetry.

An oblong fellow called grik, with a single hair styled in a dreadlock, spoke of a recent project that entailed burning the outline of a Mandelbrot fractal in the field of a Sussex farmer. To his surprise, and, to the general consternation, a more bulbous gent named Bloominggrubgrmm, who had just plugged himself into a light socket, declared that his planet had originated the idea of burning fields with Mandelbrot fractals, and no one else ought to be doing it in Sussex or anywhere.

grik, who sounded like a thrashing hard drive, shouted that it was he, not Bloominggrubgrmm, who had the right to burn Mandelbrot fractals into fields, and that this exclusive license applied not just to Mandelbrot fractals but to all fractals, as well as geometric patterns consisting of any combination of rectangles and chevrons.

Bloominggrubgrmm scoffed, adding that, whereas his own rights encompassed all crops, grik's more limited privileges applied only to fields that were planted with old world wheat.

grik reacted insanely, rising wrecklessly and brandishing a ray gun. He declared that Bloominggrubgrmm's rights were of no consequence, for they had been filed improperly with an inconsequential authority, whereas

the real rights were registered eternally on planet Zephro9 in the Doniboombo system.

Bloominggrubgrmm began to blurt out angry epithets that even the others from his own planet could not follow. He declared that he would not bother to go to Zephro9 for a matter of so little consequence, because it was too far away and he didn't want to waste the rocket fuel. grik replied that, if Bloominggrubgrmm were worried about the cost of rocket fuel, he shouldn't even be playing this game.

At that point, Bloominggrubgrmm let loose with a burst from a positron equalizer, scoring the faint outline of a Mandelbrot in the center of grik's forehead. The rest of the panelists then lifted out their own ray guns, diving for the cover of conference chairs while water glasses exploded and the roof blew off in a sudden burst of light.

Joe

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