

Exaga

- Creator and maintainer of the 'Slackware ARM on a Raspberry Pi' - [SARPi Project](#) .
- Passionate *Slacker* since 2004.

About me

Hello! I'm an English guy who's always been fascinated by computers. Since I first got my hands on a [ZX81](#) (way back in the early 1980's) these machines, which can repetitively and perpetually carry out what is programmed into them, have been something of a wonder to me. As a child, I'd always felt more content in front of a keyboard than kicking a ball around or doing all the other things that kids get up to, much to the annoyance of my elders. They always told me, "Go out and get some fresh air into your lungs. No good things will come from staring at a screen all day!" Funny how these days some of them rely on those '*no good things*' which did come from it. lol 😊

I gradually went from dabbling with BASIC on the ZX81, ZX Spectrum, Amstrad 464/664, and Commodore 64, to AmigaDOS on the Commodore Amiga 500/600/1200, and then to running MSDOS/Windows 3.11 on an IBM PC type desktop. Looking back, I guess that was just the normal order of things and many other computer addicted individuals like myself might have similar experiences and stories to tell. Throughout the different platforms I have had fun with there was a common theme of programming; creating games and slideshows, and composing music, amongst other things. As technology advanced it became clear to me that computers were useful for more than just having fun with and could be utilized for educational purposes in a multitude of ways. It wasn't long before my hungry brain was yearning for more input in order to exercise and expand my knowledge. Towards the end of 1996 was my first encounter with the Internet. "ZOMG!!!" I thought, and the rest is history...

Slackware Linux

My first venture into Linux was early in December 2004 on the suggestion of a friend, [Aal](#). He strongly advised that I should try Slackware. Little did I know at that time that this was to be my baptism of fire! I spent the first week with Slackware by breaking my system, many times, and asking Aal to "fix it". Until the point came when he said, "WTF!?!?! Slackware is the most stable Linux system you will EVER work on. How can you keep screwing it up??? The next time you break it, you'll be fixing it yourself!" After that, I got real and instead of employing the *trial and error* methods of educating myself (which had served me so well in the past), I decidedly took to the Internet and began to learn the right way. Or, at least, not the wrong way. Slackware (and Linux in general) was a whole new and very different, but exciting, ball game for me personally and up until this very day I have enjoyed every minute of it! Well, mostly every minute. lol 😊

I have tried many other Linux distributions but their appeal has not lasted with me. I think Slackware's, "KISS" philosophy, of what an operating system should offer and consist of and how it should run, is the thing that's endeared me to it. More so than any of the others. Slackware just makes sense to me.

Slackware ARM on a Raspberry Pi - The SARPi Project

It was a few months before the first Raspberry Pi was released when Aal and me discussed the device. We both agreed that neither of us would be interested in playing with it if Slackware was not an available operating system to install and run. Of course, we were both aware of [Slackware ARM](#) and the work [Mozes](#) was involved with. After much searching on the Internet the prospects looked very grim indeed. There were a few places where Slackware on a Raspberry Pi was mentioned but no concrete information on development or signs that any plans had been formulated to bring this wonderful OS to the RPi platform. So, we decided we were going to do it ourselves. (NB: we hadn't got much of a clue that it would be so much work and effort, in our ignorance at that time. lol) However, I'm glad to say that during the approx. 6 month wait for delivery of our Raspberry Pis, quite a few people had been quietly and successfully working away at bringing Slackware ARM to the device. We then decided to shelf our plans (as no time or effort had been wasted on them anyway) and instead we downloaded and installed various images that had become available. For a few days we tested and played with these pre-built Slackware ARM images but I have to say, personally, I wasn't getting that 'Slackware factor' of enjoyment and rewarding experience that I so much loved. It took me a few seconds to realise why, once I'd given it some thought. These Slackware ARM images I was installing weren't installed from scratch or configured by me. They were somebody else's idea of what my Slackware system should contain and how it should be configured. THAT right there was the point at which I realised there needed to be more involved than just downloading a disk image, writing it to a SD card, and booting it in a Raspberry Pi. That's when Aal and me started to discuss and plan what we needed to do. Aal, being more technically minded and vastly more experienced in using Slackware than me, started firing off what was required and procedures and the order of things and 10 billion other things that seriously blew my mind because most of he said was wayyyyy over my head and level of understanding. However, there was light at the end of this tunnel (vision) and this particular light was as big and as bright as the Sun itself!!!

Independent of each other, we both came across [Dave's Collective - Slackware ARM on the Raspberry Pi](#) website. All credit and kudos goes to **Dave Spencer** who had brilliantly created his own set of Slackware scripts which enabled users to create their own Slackware ARM installers and packages. Having realised that this was EXACTLY what we were trying to achieve, we downloaded the scripts which Dave had made available through his website and used these to create test packages and installers. Because Aal and me both had jobs and worked 5 days a week there wasn't a lot of time to spend on this project at that time. It took approx. 3-4 weeks, with much editing/hacking/modifying of Dave's scripts, to get to a stage where we were happy with the results. In order to keep the disk images to a minimum size, Aal suggested that only the /boot partition should be present, which made sense. As a consequence, which I fully supported and encouraged, users installing Slackware ARM would subsequently be forced to create their own /swap and root partitions, which I believe is part of the 'Slackware experience' - the same as it is when installing Slackware x86_64. This way users were able to set the parameters of their system during SETUP (i.e. installation) and configure it according to their own needs. This familiar method to install Slackware (ARM) was preferable to using pre-built images where the learning-curve and experience gained from it was omitted by design.

Once the finer details (i.e. what should be included in the kernel, etc.) were decided upon I then realised that a walk-through "How To install Slackware ARM on a Raspberry Pi" type tutorial/guide would be ultimately beneficial for those who have never gone through the process, and also for those who have. So, I personally undertook the task of creating the [SARPi Project website](#) in order to fulfil this idea. During the months and years which followed there have been quite a number of people involved in helping and assisting with various problems that popped up due to various changes in hardware and updates in code. Far too many people to mention but much gratitude, heartfelt thanks, and great respect, goes out to all those who have helped, directly or otherwise, towards making the

SARPi Project become a small success. 😊

Over time, after the releases of the RPi2 and RPi3, came the [SARPi2 Project website](#) and [SARPi3 Project website](#) respectively. Then, [Mozes](#) suggested that to cut down on time, effort, and maintenance, the three separate SARPi Project websites should be combined into “one site to rule them all”. Great idea! This was realised with the inception of the current [SARPi.co.uk Project website](#) with the other website URLs redirecting to it.

Slackware for the future

I'm very interested in seeing Slackware ARM64 (Aarch64 port) become a reality. It's a seriously massive undertaking but I think, if enough of the right people put their heads and efforts together, anything is possible.

I'll be running Slackware/Slackware ARM until Pat and Stuart stop releasing it. Then I'll cry! ;-p

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Last update: **2017/12/26 19:27 (UTC)**

