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Apple Copies GNOME and GNOME Copies Apple, but That's a Good Thing

Imitation is almost always a form of flattery, or so they say

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Jun 4, 2014 09:10 GMT · By Silviu Stahie

The announcement regarding the release of the new Mac OS X Yosemite has raised a lot of eyebrows in the Linux community, because many users felt that Apple had copied some elements found in GNOME 3.x, but that might not be such a bad thing after all.

The upheaval in the Linux community regarding this design choice made by Apple is obvious and people are talking everywhere – on Reddit, social media, and comments – about the fact that the header bars for Mac OS X Yosemite look a little too much like the ones used in GNOME 3.x.

Some of the users think that this is obvious and others don't see it at all. The discussion shouldn't be about this simple controversy, but about whether it is right or wrong. And the truth is that it probably isn't wrong.

You see, GNOME developers actually borrowed some of their design choices from Apple when they decided to switch form GNOME 2 to 3, but they didn't just blatantly copy what they needed. They adapted it to their needs and made some very controversial decisions along the way.

There are even some similarities between the reactions of the communities. Very few people actually liked the new GNOME 3 when it was first introduced. Many users threatened to give up on this desktop environment entirely because they didn't agree with the change.

A similar thing is also happening with the Apple community. When the company makes some radical design changes, there is resistance and it takes a while for people to absorb them.

Now, GNOME copied Apple and Apple copied GNOME. This is actually a good thing, because this is what open source tells us. It's true that Apple is not a company that loves open source and it's the same company that has a patent on "things" with rounded corners.

Mac OS X header bars

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present in Android for years.

The open source ecosystem works very well with the copying principle at its heart. When someone makes something new and interesting, other developers adapt it for their own needs. That's why there are so many desktop environments out there and why some features look the same on most of them.

When GNOME decided to implement some design aspects that were found in Apple products, it wasn't a bad idea. Apple has some great designers and they know their craft, but nothing changes when it's the other way around.

If Apple copies something from you, as a developer, that can only serve to strengthen your direction. It usually means that what you are doing is interesting enough and other designers are taking notice.

The same things happen in the auto industry. How many times did you spot a car from a distance and thought you knew the maker, but when it got close you saw that in fact it was only something that resembled the car you had in mind?

This is the perfect situation to quote Pablo Picasso: "Good artists copy, great artists steal." It means that if someone is "stealing" from you or if you "steal" something, that thing is of actual value for both parties.

#Apple, #GNOME, #Mac OS X Yosemite, #GNOME 3, #Linux

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