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Doing VFX Work in Linux? Here's Your Reference Platform

Working with Software Vendors, Visual Effects Society Promotes a New Industry Standard for Interoperability

By Bryant Frazer / Jul 3, 2014

The Visual Effects Society (VES) has released its Calendar Year 2014 Reference Platform, which specifies versions of different Linux tools and libraries as a target for VFX software. VES said the platform aims to minimize incompatibilities, make it easier to support Linux pipelines, and encourage more software vendors to release tools that run on Linux.

Anyone who's done much work on Linux systems knows about the tangles that can arise when different software packages rely on different iterations of crucial libraries. Standardizing a baseline set of tools for installation on a VFX-ready Linux workstation should help, assuming vendors cooperate and users are made aware of the recommendations. To that end, the VES plans to announce the 2015 version of the platform at SIGGRAPH, and is currently inviting industry feedback on its draft version.

"For the past year, the VES has been collaborating with Autodesk and other software vendors to create a reference Linux platform to address the endemic hassle of version-itis," said Chris Vienneau, Autodesk's director of product management for media and entertainment, in a prepared statement. It makes sense to have Autodesk involved since, as the VES noted in making the announcement, vendors have typically fallen in line with Maya when it came to platform requirements. VES said "several software vendors" are currently part of its VFX Reference Platform Working Group, and said the group will expand as the process becomes better established.

"By working with industry software providers, we've identified major library versions that are updated annually that can be shared between all major apps," said VES Board Chair Jeffrey A. Okun in a statement. "This is a huge step forward for software distribution for VFX on Linux." The VES acknowledged that some incompatibilities remain between products including Maya 2015, Houdini 13, and Nuke 8, but expressed hope that the requirements will converge in future releases.

Below are the current and planned VFX Platforms for 2014 and 2015. For more details, including ways to offer feedback on the selections, visit the [VFX Reference Platform website](#).

VFX Platform CY2014 (Current)

gcc 4.1.2
python 2.7.3
Qt 4.8.5
PySide 1.2
OpenEXR 2.0.1
OpenColorIO 1.0.7
OpenSubdiv 2.3.3

Alembic 1.5.x
Boost 1.53
FBX 2015
Intel TBB 4.1

VFX Platform CY2015 Draft (Planned)

gcc 4.8.2
glibc 2.12 (Added 30-Jun-14)
python 2.7.x
Qt 4.8.x
PySide 1.2.x (Updated 25-Jun-14)
OpenEXR 2.1.x (Updated 25-Jun-14)
OpenColorIO 1.0.7
OpenSubdiv 2.3.3
OpenVDB 2.2
Alembic 1.5.x
Boost 1.55
FBX latest
Intel TBB 4.2 (Updated 25-Jun-14)

VFX Reference Platform: www.vfxplatform.com/

