

Press release – Former Acorn Archimedes and RISC OS users

RISC OS – breathing new life into your favourite operating system

Are you a member of the lingering community of Acorn users and RISC OS enthusiasts who continue to appreciate Acorn's wonderful, innovative operating system over 30 years after it first appeared? Perhaps you're still struggling along with a StrongARM Risc PC on its last legs. Maybe you upgraded to a more powerful, newer system such as an IYONIX pc or an ARMini. Perhaps you just dabble in RISC OS through emulation on a PC or Mac, or maybe you're making the best of a budget system based on a Raspberry Pi.

Regardless of how you access RISC OS in 2020, you know what makes it special, and how liberating it can be to use on a native ARM-based computer. As you're well aware, RISC OS unlocks the full speed of any ARM-based system. That's hardly surprising, since RISC OS was the first operating system programmed explicitly for the ARM processor, and was written by the same people who designed the processor itself.

The ARM processor was originally created by Acorn as a low-power, high-performance 32-bit CPU. Today, this groundbreaking do-everything processor core is known the world over for being used in mind-blowing numbers to power every kind of smart technology, from intelligent cables to mobile phones. ARM CPUs are so superior to all other CPU concepts that 90% of the world's mobile phones are now based on them. Apple recently announced a transition from Intel processors to its own ARM-based Apple Silicon for its Macintosh systems, meaning that its entire computing product portfolio, from budget iPhones to high-end professional Mac workstations, will soon be based on ARM processor designs.

Why should RISC OS be so fast on the ARM processor? Because it was originally designed to run well on the very first 8MHz ARM CPU in the late 1980s. Modern ARM processors typically run at least 100 times faster than that; most run several hundred times faster. Unlike Linux and other operating systems that can run on ARM, RISC OS is not slowed down by having been designed to run on multiple hardware platforms. In RISC OS there are not multiple layers of software modules between the application and the hardware. From the outset, RISC OS was designed exclusively for ARM processors, and its speed-critical portions are written directly in ARM code for maximum performance.

Another reason for the high-speed user experience is the cooperative multitasking design that gives priority to the application that you are actually using. Acorn designed the operating system with an innovative graphical user interface, and as an existing RISC OS user, you already know how fluid the system can be even on ancient hardware; it's staggeringly fast on modern ARM processors. You also know that its desktop interface retains many excellent and unique features that make it stand up well against modern competition; in some ways, it still offers the best and most productive experience of any desktop operating system, even today.

A large library of excellent third party application software has built up over the years, much of which is now free or very affordable. There is a choice of excellent applications covering most major categories, including word processors, spreadsheets, databases, vector graphics and desktop publishing. Indeed, RISC OS is particularly well suited to DTP, as it has always had full inbuilt support for vector graphic editing and a world-leading outline font system, still unmatched in quality by any mainstream system other than perhaps macOS (which gained similar features well over a decade later).

If you are a retro-gamer, you will have lots of fun with RISC OS. There are numerous emulators available for a wide range of systems, including Acorn BBC Micro, Sinclair ZX Spectrum, Commodore 64, DOS and many more. You can also enjoy high-quality gaming with ScummVM and native ports of classics such as Doom, Duke Nukem and Lemmings. Not to mention the best ever implementation of Elite!

But RISC OS is still not a fully polished OS for the modern world. Over the last 20 years since the demise of Acorn, development has been relatively slow, and it is still lacking drivers for some important new technologies such as Wi-Fi, Bluetooth and NVMe storage. (A full-blown modern web browser will be released in some months' time.)

So, we have created a crowdfunding project, Cloverleaf RISC OS, to gain support and funds to implement the missing drivers and offer new native RISC OS hardware. If you want RISC OS to be part of your computer lifestyle, then please support us in our efforts and help fund our RISC OS Cloverleaf campaign at Kickstarter.

Kickstarter

<https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/riscos-cloverleaf/cloverleaf-built-on-the-powerful-open-source-risc-os>

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