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Linux controversy

In May 2004, a Debian packet maintainer (Eduard Bloch) started to send repeated personal insults to Jörg Schilling after one of Bloch's patch requests against mkisofs was rejected because it was full of bugs.

In March 2006, a group of Debian maintainers started to attack the cdrtools project.

The latter attacks have been based on the fact that cdrtools was licensed under the GPL. As a result, on May 15th 2006 most projects from the cdrtools project bundle have been relicensed under CDDL (giving more freedom to users than the GPL does). At the same time, an important amount of additional code ([DVD support code](#) from Jörg Schilling and a Reed Solomon decoder from Heiko Eißfeldt) has been added to the freely published sources.

In summer 2006, the attacks from the group of Debian maintainers escalated and in September 2006, these people created something they call a fork from cdrtools. They soon added a lot of [bugs](#) and this way turned the "fork" into a questionable experiment. The last work on this "fork" has been done eight months later on May 6th 2007, then the leader of the attacks stopped his efforts on the fork and instead started to advertize for nerolinux. **During the Debian project activity, the source code distributed by Debian was modified in a way that [violates GPL and Copyright](#) and makes it impossible to legally distribute this "fork" called "cdrkit".** There is [no license problem](#) with the original cdrtools.

Although there is no "project" activity on the "fork" anymore since 18 months (which is more than twice the time of the pseudo activity period), there are still people who spread incorrect claims on both the original project and the fork. Please help the free original project by correcting these incorrect claims.

Strange license claims from some Debian maintainers

This is what the group of Debian maintainers used to attack the cdrtools

project:

They claimed that the GPL requires the build system (used to compile GPL software) to be included and to be published under GPL if binaries from the compiled GPL sources are published.

They then took old cdrtools sources and replaced the original build system by something that is not under GPL (nor under a GPL compatible license) either. They even omit parts of the build system they use (although GPL §3 is very explicit about this).

Now you only need to become crazy to understand why they believe the Debian fork is "free" but the original cdrtools is not.

Sun is doing the same with GNOME and many programs owned by the FSF

Later, Debian added the claim that GPLd programs cannot be linked against CDDLs libraries but Sun does the same (as done in cdrtools) with many programs on Solaris.

Sun is happily waiting since 2005 for being sued by a Copyright holder of a related GPLd program in order to defend the freedom of OSS in court.

Even the FSF did not sue Sun, so it is obvious that the FSF knows that there is no problem with this combination.

There is no license problem in the original cdrtools

Sun lawyers made a full legal review on the cdrtools package between August and November 2008 and did not find any license problem.

[Read more about the background](#) in a few days.

The Debian fork violates the GPL and the *Urheberrecht*

This is a list of violations in the Debian fork. It does not claim to be complete. The [Urheberrechtsgesetz](#) will be named *UrhG* below.

The GPL preamble (see also Urheberrecht §14 below) disallows modifications in case they are suitable to affect the original author's

reputation. As Debian installs symlinks with the original program names and as many people still believe that the symlinks with the original program names are the original software, Debian does not follow the GPL.

GPL §2a requires to keep track of any author and change date **inside** all changed files. This is not done in the fork.

GPL §2c requires modified programs to print Copyright messages as intended by the original author. This is not done in the fork *wodim*.

GPL §3 requires the *complete source* to be distributed if there is a binary distribution. The Debian fork tarball does not include everything needed to compile the cdrtools fork (complete source) and Debian does not give a written offer to deliver the missing parts.

[UrhG §13](#) requires redistributors to accept the way the author likes to mark his ownership. Debian removed such marks from the source of the fork against the will of the author and did ignore hints on this fact.

[UrhG §14](#) forbids modifications that may affect personal interests of the author in the work. Debian introduced such modifications as Debian knowingly introduced bugs that prevent use and changed the behavior in a way that makes the command line syntax non-portable and Debian still makes the work available under the original names.

Many Linux distributions now come with [broken](#) variants of cdrtools

If you are on Debian, RedHat, SuSE and some other Linux distributions, you need to take extreme care as these distributions recently started to replace cdrtools by a fork that is based on an outdated version of cdrtools. This fork did not fix bugs but rather introduced [new bugs](#) that never have been in the original software.

For other Linux distributions, I suggest to have a look at `/usr/bin/cdrecord` and check whether this is a link to another program or whether there is an original program file. Also call `"cdrecord -version"` to check what version you are using. The affected distributions replaced all programs from cdrtools (**cdrecord**, **cdda2wav**, **readcd**, **mkisofs**, ...) by programs from the fork.

How do I find out whether I am running a recent original version of cdrtools?

Call "cdrecord -version" and check the output. If you see something like:

```
Cdrecord-ProDVD-ProBD-Clone 2.01.01a51 (i386-pc-linux) Copyright (C) 1995-2008 Jörg Schilling
```

If you are running the original software, also check the other programs to have the same version number in order to be 100% sure. If you see version numbers below 2.01.01a09 (including 2.01), you are running outdated software that needs an update if you are running Linux-2.6.8.1 or newer.

Starting with 2.01.01a32, all original programs contain the year **(2007 or later)** and **Jörg Schilling** in the first line of the **-version** output. As an Example, "mkisofs -version" outputs:

```
mkisofs 2.01.01a51 (i386-pc-linux) Copyright (C) 1993-1997 Eric Youngdale (C) 1997-2008 Jörg Schilling
```

If you are not running the [original software](#), get recent original software from [the "Download recent"](#) or from [the "Download latest"](#) location. Unpack, compile by running "make" and install. Make sure that all programs that send (SCSI) commands to CD/DVD/Blu-Ray drives are installed to be `sudo` root.

If you are running cdrtools frontends like k3b and others and do not like to replace these programs with original versions, you should remove files like `/usr/bin/wodim`, `/usr/bin/genisoimage`, `/usr/bin/icedax`, `/usr/bin/readom` and replace them by links to the original software. Note that k3b prefers the original over the fork because of the bug in the fork.

What are the problems when running programs from the broken fork?

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In all programs of the fork that send SCSI commands, you may be unable to access any of the CD/DVD/Blu-Ray drives at all if you are on Linux-2.6.8.1 or later. This is due to a missing workaround for the Linux kernel interface change that happened with Linux-2.6.8.1.

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In the cdrecord clone from the fork, messages have been removed that would warn you in case that you are not running cdrecord as root. As some of the SCSI commands used by cdrecord need root privileges, cdrecord may fail later with strange problems because of this hack. Note that cdrecord supports (and needs to support) many vendor unique features of drives (e.g. for optimized writing of CDs and DVDs). Linux filters away all vendor

specific SCSI commands in case the program that sends them does not have root privileges. There are other non vendor unique commands that are filtered also.

The mature DVD support from the original cdrecord has been ripped off and replaced by something of very poor quality. The replacement code misses key features (like -atip extraction and printout). As a result the DVD code in the fork is not correctly parameterized.

All recent cdrecord enhancements like better CUE Sheet for CDs support and Blu-Ray support are missing in the clone.

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The mkisofs clone from the fork is the worst of all. The web is full of [bug reports](#) for the clone.

The original mkisofs fixed dozens of bugs from the early days of mkisofs (1993-1997). These bugs are still present in the fork.

The original mkisofs added support for *multi-extent* files that may be > 4 GB (up to 8 TB) while the fork does not support more than 4 GB.

The original mkisofs added **find(1)** command line support into mkisofs via **libfind** and thus gives a lot new features that are important for people who like to use mkisofs for simple backups or like to avoid the need to create a copy of the tree that is going to be processed by mkisofs. This feature is missing in the fork.

The original mkisofs added support for Rock Ridge Version-1.12 and now supports correctly working hard links. This feature is missing in the fork.

The original mkisofs added support for correct link counts on all files and directories. This feature is missing in the fork.

The original mkisofs replaced the GNU getlongopt based CLI interface by something with much less bugs. The design for the mkisofs options from the early days introduced a lot of similar named long options. The old **GNU getlongopt** based code does not detect typo's in the options but rather finds the option with the longest substring that does not have a typo and assigns it a string parameter that contains the typo.

The original mkisofs added working support for UTF-8 based locales and support for **iconv** based translations. The clone claims to do the same but disabled key features from mkisofs with the attempt to support UTF-8 and may create images with incorrect file name lengths without even printing a

warning.

The original mkisofs added much better UDF support (such as support for symlinks, userids/groupids and permissions as well as support for MacOS extensions). These features are missing in the fork.

The mkisofs clone will create unusable filesystems in some cases when Joliet is used. This is a bug that never existed in the original.

Ask your Linux distributor to include recent originals instead of broken forks

Inform them that if they force you to use the defective fork instead of allowing you to choose the correctly working original cdrtools, they publish a non-free Linux distribution.

Tell them that **you** like to decide yourself which program you choose. Whether it is the fork or whether it is the original program depends on which package works better.

Some Linux distributions ship both and do not try to patronize their users, others do not give their users the freedom.

The following Linux distributions currently work against the freedom of their users:

Debian Fedora OpenSuse SuSE

If you know of other unfree distributions, please report.

The following Linux distributions currently grant their users the freedom to select the better CD/DVD/Blu-Ray writing software:

Gentoo

[Gentoo cdrecord packet](#)

The Ubuntu burning team is preparing a package for the original cdrtools.

[Ubuntu cdrecord+mkisofs+cdd2wav packet](#)

[Package archive of the ubuntu burning team](#) with additional hints (e.g. how to modify /etc/apt/sources.list to allow the installation).

What is the background for the forks?

When the Open Software movement has been started by people like Larry Wall, Rich Salz and others in the late 1970s, it was important for all authors of free software to write software that runs best on all available platforms.

Later, when the Free Software Foundation was created by Richard Stallman in the mid 1980s, it was still important to write software that runs best on all available platforms. This continued until the late 1990s. Linux did already exist but the software that many people now call "linux software" was mainly developed on Sun systems until the mid 1990s.

Then around y2000, more and more free software became non-portable because it's maintainers moved to Linux and did not care about portability anymore.

At the same time, Linux distributions got into trouble because more and more Linux users did no longer buy Linux distributions but downloaded them from the network. This caused pressure on the commercial Linux distributors. RedHat and SuSe are well known commercial Linux distributors, but even Debian needs to be called a "commercial Linux distributor". Key people from Debian are paid for their work on Debian ([see here](#)) and for this reason do no longer represent community interests but the commercial interests of their investors.

How is this all related to cdrtools?

As commercial Linux distributions are interested in revenue, they need "arguments" they can print on glossy paper...

In order to get these arguments, they are no longer interested in code quality. Instead they are interested in marketing "facts".

If they add UNICODE UTF-8 support to the list of key features of their distribution, they need to be able to tell their users that all available software supports UTF-8. A lot of Open Source software does not support UTF-8 yet and with many of the OSS programs this problem is not obvious. With other software like **mkisofs**, the problem is obvious.

Linux distributors could cooperate with the author and try to help with the implementation of UTF-8 support.....

In fact, this happened around y2004. I received a patch that was intended

to add UTF-8 support to mkisofs.

Unfortunately, the code quality of this patch was lousy. It tried to incorrectly initialize a structure and it handled only a few obvious cases. Many important issues with UTF-8 support have been completely ignored. As a result, I rejected this patch because I do care about code quality (I still need to be able to maintain the code in a few years). The people in the Linux distribution could have fixed the problems and created a useful solution but they did not do this.

Now these people have been in trouble and needed an excuse for their behavior. They created the fairy tale that there is a license problem in cdrtools. They created a network of "cooperation" and supported some people which created a fork of cdrtools based on the fairy tale.....

This fork created a lot of pseudo actions in the first few months. As (in contrary to the original cdrtools) it is not based on code quality, this fork did experiment with Linux specific behavior but finally failed to create any new or better interface.

The results are a mess. The cdrecord fork on SuSe-10.2 (running on a well supported IBM laptop) is completely unable to talk to the built in CD/DVD drive. The unmodified original cdrecord is able to talk to the drive, even if the dev= parameter is omitted. The packet maintainer from SuSe still claims that he needs to patch the original software in order to add support for things that are supposed to be missing in the original software. Well, the original cdrtools meanwhile do support UTF-8 correctly....does he like to reduce the code quality to what SuSe users "expect"?

Despite all these interests, the fork died in May 2007.

What are the real interests of the Linux distributors?

Are the Linux distributors still interested in Free and Open Software?

Will Linux distributors reveal that they did make a mistake and go back to the real FROSS model?

I invite all Linux distributors to go back to support real Free and Open Source Software and to show that they are able to correct a mistake from the past.

Last Change 09/01/23

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