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## Extreme Tux Racer Review

### *A race simulator with... penguins!*

After a hard day at work, you decide to relax and play a nice game on your Linux system. As you don't want anything too complex that could require a lot of attention, you decide to find a game that's simple and fun to play. Based on the fact that Tux, the penguin, is the most popular guy in the Linux world (besides Linus Torvalds, of course), you could try Extreme Tux Racer, a very popular racing simulation game where you drive... Tux! You control the popular penguin as it slides on the mountain, to catch as many herrings as possible. Also, you will have to finish the race in time, or you'll lose. The game menu is nice, packed up with some cool things... cold as ice, I could say. The cursor is an icicle and on the background you see snowflakes falling, which will swarm around your cursor when you move it around the menu. Speaking of the main menu, here's what you can find in it: 1. Enter a campaign 2. Practice 3. Highscore 4. Configuration 5. Credits 6. Quit! If you want to see who worked on Extreme Tux Racer, so you can enjoy the game, you should click on "Credits". This will also show you what version of ETR you're running and a short info about it. After you satisfy your curiosity about the persons behind ETR, you should go through "Configuration" and set the game to fit you. The menu is not so well organized, which I'm sure you'll also notice. For example, we have "Graphics" and "Video". It would have been nice if there was only one category for graphics. Another thing that seemed odd was the fact that the user had to select the language of the game from... "Graphics". From "Video" you can change your resolution as well as the color depth and you can enable FSAA (Full-Scene Anti-Aliasing). If you enable this option - and if your card supports it - you will enjoy a much smoother gameplay. Also, you will notice that everything looks much better after you select FSAA. In "Audio" you can opt for sound effects and music or none of them, the bits per sample and samples per second. The "Keyboard" menu lets you select what keys to use for the actions Tux will take in the game, like turn left/right, paddle (which is an interesting feature that can help you only in some moments of the game, while in others it will make things much harder), jump (you will have to press the assigned key and hold it, then when a jump is imminent, release it and create a larger jump), trick (Tux will do a trick in mid-air) and reset (resets Tux's position back on the track). Okay, after configuring the game, it's time to play! I recommend you to start with Practice, before selecting "Enter a campaign". This way, you get a hang on how everything works in the game, and there's nothing to limit you. Also, you can test all the tracks available in the game and get used to them before you take on them. I almost forgot about the fact that you can select the way Tux will go down the slope: using a snowboard or on its own belly. It's funnier if you see it go down the slope on its belly, though. By the way, Tux looks a little bit weird, like it is made of plastic, or maybe it's something inflatable. I've started practicing, so I can learn some tricks with Tux. The HUD is made up of a timer, the number of herrings you catch, a speedometer and the current race progress. I managed to get to a speed of 200 km/h, which is very fast for a fat penguin like Tux! Some big holes in the tracks did a great job in stopping me to get to the finish line, but I found a way to get past them (this is called cheating, right?). If I press "R" just before the moment I get into one of these gaps, my position is reset somewhere safe, and I can think about a way to get past the gap next time. I think it's somewhat hard to find which track is designed for a beginner and which one is for an expert. There's nothing in the menu to select the difficulty level, but there's a way to differentiate which of the tracks are harder: those that are not available from the start of the game seem to be for experienced users. For every track, you have a limited number of tries - or lives - to complete it and advance to the next one. **The Good:** Extreme Tux Racer is one of the games that help you relax after some hard work and I think it's very good for children, mostly because there's no violence in it, and it's also funny. **The Bad:** The menu is not very organized, and Tux looks like a plastic puppet; also, when it is on the snowboard, Tux looks like the board is glued to it. I think that after playing ETR once, you get bored with it, as it is not very interactive. **The Truth:** I found out from "Credits", in the main menu, that a new version of Extreme Tux Racer is being worked on and it will be much more different than those we were used to. I can hardly wait for this version, maybe the developers will make it look and perform better. And the most important thing: increased interactivity! *Here are some screenshots with Extreme Tux Racer in action:*