Devolo LiveCam

Graham Morrison knows that the NSA are terribly busy with all that snooping, so he helps them out by putting an IP webcam in his office.

In brief...

» A webcam that connects to the internet through powerline Ethernet. Also consider: any number of wireless IP webcams.

We have one simple rule; whatever we're reviewing needs to support Linux. There was one time when we reviewed a piece of Windows software that enabled you to restore files from a Linux partition, and there have been a few pieces of cross-platform software that use Java. But otherwise: no Tux, no review*. The Devolo LiveCam might be our first exception. Tux is featured in all its publicity material and on the side of the box, but to run the software that comes with it, you run the Windows version through *Wine*. Devolo is honest about this, but it's a little surprising.

It's likely you've already heard of Devolo and its excellent powerline Ethernet adaptors, which carry the internet through the power lines in your house. It doesn't take a huge leap of imagination to guess what the LiveCam package includes; a webcam module that's designed to work with your existing powerline network.

There are two ways to buy this product: one package that comes with a 200 AVduo adaptor bundled with the webcam (which is the one we were sent), and another that includes only the webcam. The first is useful if you don't have an existing powerline

> The *LiveCam* is well designed, and it's plug 'n' play, but it's lacking some geeky features that we think are a requirement.

"Devolo's download link is the aforementioned Windows executable."

network, as all you need to do is plug in the adaptor close to your router and connect that with the included Ethernet cable. But the price isn't so attractive when you look at wireless internet cameras, which can be cheaper. Option two is the best value, as it enables you to slot the LiveCam into your network in places that a wireless network might not cover, such as your garage or shed. This is helped by the sturdy design, two sets of screw positions, and the promise that it will work outdoors – although it's not waterproof.

Connecting the LiveCam is as simple as plugging it in and pressing the encryption button on the side of one of

*We have broken this golden rule on page 19 by looking at PC-BSD. D'oh!

your adaptors and then on the side of the LiveCam. A small LED turns green to show that your new device has been accepted. Despite this being all it takes to connect the device to the network, and unlike nearly every other internet-connected webcam, you can't do anything further until you install another piece of software.

Red, red wine

This is where Linux compatibility comes in, because the file on the end of Devolo's download link is the aforementioned Windows executable. We've mixed feelings about this: on the one hand, there are excellent Android and iOS apps that do the same job, they're easy to install, and put the application in the place you're most likely to use it. On the other, Devolo is barely providing Linux support despite the Tux on the packaging. In the company's defence, installation through *Wine* went painlessly, albeit with broken fonts, and despite the webcam being located at home while we installed the client application in the office. We simply connected through the internet with the device name and password – all very easy.

What's worse than a Windows executable, however, is that Devolo's own application is severely limited. The maximum resolution provided is

640x480, and all you can do is connect, watch for a while, take a screenshot and disconnect. There's no motion sensing, no way of alerting you to an intruder, no time-lapse photography and no movie mode. None of the cool stuff you can do with *ZoneMinder*, or even a decent NAS from Synology or Qnap. It is great for watching a sleeping baby, especially with its very effective ring of infrared LEDs to light up a dark room, and it's great for making no-fuss connections across the internet, but it's nowhere near as useful as a generic Wi-Fi webcam, especially when you add the potential insecurity of relying on Devolo's protocols for internet access. It's perfect then as a hamster cam. **LXF**

LINUX FORMAT Verdict

Devolo LiveCam

Developer: Devolo
Web: www.devolo.co.uk
Price: £89.99/£119.99 (with adaptor)

Features	4/10
Performance	6/10
Ease of use	7/10
Value	5/10

» If only it operated as a regular IP enabled webcam, rather than through Devolo's limited software program.

Rating 5/10