



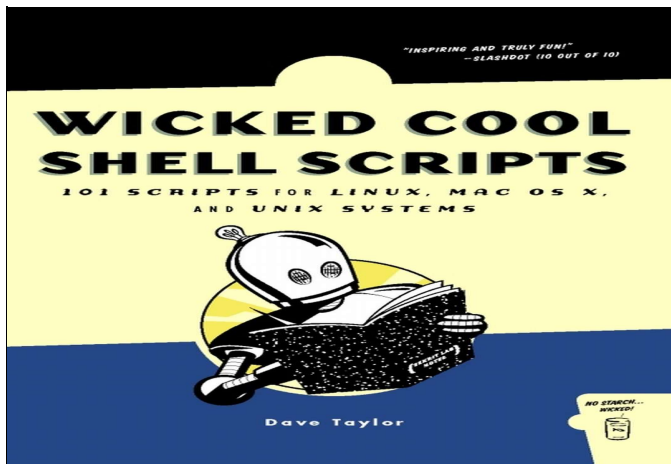
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Book review: Wicked Cool Shell Scripts by *Dave Taylor*

101 Scripts for Linux, MAC OS X and UNIX systems

By Alan Berg

Wicked Cool Shell Scripts by Dave Taylor is a book that delights my force for good hacker's instinct. Listing 101 viable Bourne shell (sh) example scripts succinctly, one is hard pressed to find a better starting point to enabling your intellectual problem solving physique to gain meaningful contact with real world coding. If you enjoy pimping the Linux, Unix and Mac OS X command line into customized heaven you may find this is one of the main books for you.



The book's cover

Ok you have forced me, I admit it. My real life job is as a developer. I build and glue and hit systems with big hammers. As a developer, I feel a great deal of pleasure taking control of my UNIX and Linux environment. In fact, inevitably, whenever I automate a process I end up calling a bash script via a cron job. Therefore, Dave Taylor's well-populated book resonates with my core skills. From example 1, finding programs in the PATH, and onward, it becomes increasingly obvious that the author has a great deal of real life experience. This automatically translates to cool, wicked scripts that are in solid contact with the underlying problem domains. So, you want to control how you delete files or get weather information from the command line, read on.

The contents

With 101 accurate and to the point scripts divided over 12 interests, all contained within 364 pages, the book is a dense and accurate story of the potential of small, well-written shell scripts.

The original developers of UNIX built quickly with the utilitarian philosophy of creating small commands that do their job well. Scripts play the role of glue, which, under this deliberate design circumstance, allow the

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quick creation of previously unthought-of functionality by piping and variable manipulation.

Scripts play the role of glue, which allow the quick creation of previously unthought-of functionality

Ranging from customizations and tweaking of your local working environment through system administration and managing of users to Webmaster hacks and some fun and games. This code packed book gets quickly and thoroughly to the point in the way UNIX systems were supposed to evolve from the beginning of time (well... 1970).

Not that I should pick my favorite scripts, because the examples are of uniform excellence; however, examples 18 (Displaying the Contents of Directories) and 21 (Digging around in Man Page Database) I currently use daily.

Who's this book for?

With the wide spread deployment of Linux within the office and, of course, at home and on many professional desktops, I believe that this book is not only for system administrators but also for the hobbyist and so called power user as well.

The book has particular relevance to system administrators, not just for direct use of the script libraries, but also as a means to stimulate one's own imagination and reinforce one's understanding of how to do the coding business at hand

Relevance to free software

Dave Taylor's book is all about the Bourne shell and how a hacker in the positive sense may manipulate the shell to bind small commands together which create a better whole. The small commands are mainly standard across POSIX compatible systems with slight variations. Most of the scripts run on Linux systems and thus are exemplifying pure free software. However, chapter 11 highlights scripts functioning under the Mac OS X where not everything is open source yet.

Pros

This is an excellent book for system administrators or power users who wish to find example methodologies for solving system related tasks. Further, the content of Wicked Cool Shell Scripts has a long shelf time. I expect the code still to be viable five years from now as it was at the time of writing two years ago. You do not see such stability in other topic areas with technological content.

Cons

Wicked Cool Shell Scripts is not a beginner's guide to scripting. Therefore, as one would expect, the explanations are a little light at points. However, for system administrators or power users I expect no limitations from this definitely trivial barrier.

Title	Wicked Cool Shell Scripts, 101 Scripts for Linux, Mac OS X, and UNIX Systems
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Book review: Wicked Cool Shell Scripts by Dave Taylor

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CD included No
FS Oriented 8
Over all score 9

In short

Biography

[Alan Berg](#) (/user/8" title="View user profile.):

Alan Berg Bsc. MSc. PGCE, has been a lead developer at the Central Computer Services at the University of Amsterdam for the last eight years. In his spare time, he writes computer articles. He has a degree, two masters and a teaching qualification. In previous incarnations, he was a technical writer, an Internet/Linux course writer, and a science teacher. He likes to get his hands dirty with the building and gluing of systems. He remains agile by playing computer games with his kids who (sadly) consistently beat him physically, mentally and morally.

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