

speed problems on laptop

Source: <http://linux.derkeiler.com/Mailing-Lists/Debian/2005-01/4254.html>

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Date: 01/30/05

Date: Sat, 29 Jan 2005 21:42:40 -0500

To: debian-user@lists.debian.org

Hi, all,

I'd like some help diagnosing speed problems on my laptop.

Hardware:

Dell Latitude, 2 GHz cpu, 512 mb ram, 4 GB swap, nVidia vidio card.

History:

Until recently I ran a custom-compiled 2.6.6 on my Dell Latitude, with a package mix of stable, testing, and unstable. I also ran VMWare, and in it, Microsoft Windows 2000. I had respectable performance.

Every Tuesday I do "apt-get upgrade" to get anything new. I also, in Windows, do a "Windows update" via MS's website.

After this past Tuesday's update, my performance went into the toilet.

Symptoms:

- When editing a file in Vim in a gnome-terminal, it takes longer to move the cursor from line to line at the top of the screen than at the bottom. Generally scrolling the window takes longer than before. An xterm is faster than a gnome-terminal, but still seems slower than before.
- According to Windows Task Manager, Windows under VMWare uses 30% cpu more-or-less constantly (which it may or may not have done before; not sure), and more often than not 100%. *Moving the mouse in a circle* uses 60-70% cpu. Most cpu usage in Task Manager is "kernel" usage.
- Switching to "full screen mode" under VMWare makes Windows run faster.
- Generally X performance seems slower.
- Generally X seems to take a lot of CPU, as reported in 'top'.
- Sloooooow kernel compile. I'm running one now; so far it's taken 50 minutes. By contrast, my 1.4 GHz desktop (with, admittedly, twice

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as much ram) compiles a 2.6.6 in ~8 minutes.

Steps taken:

- I assumed something I'd upgraded had caused problems, so I removed the 3 patches Windows Update had applied, and rolled back all my Debian packages to pre-Jan-1 state. No change.
- I've re-installed with Debian/testing. I want to install the nVidia driver from nVidia, but it wants a kernel tree to look at, so I'm compiling a kernel.
- After the re-install, I still observe the general X slowness and cpu usage, and gnome-terminal slowness.

Hypotheses:

- Hardware problems? IRQ contention?
- Someone did something stupid in some basic routine in a core library (e.g. memset) that makes it run a lot slower than it used to, causing a systemic slowdown, including in VMWare.
 - I'd expect a lot more outcry from the Linux and/or Debian community in this case, though.
- My laptop is, for reasons of its own, down-stepping its cpu usage, via acpi, cpufreq, or similar.
- Something went wonky in my X setup, making it run really slowly or in some less-than-optimized state.

Any hints or advice? Any help appreciated!

-- Larry Clapp

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