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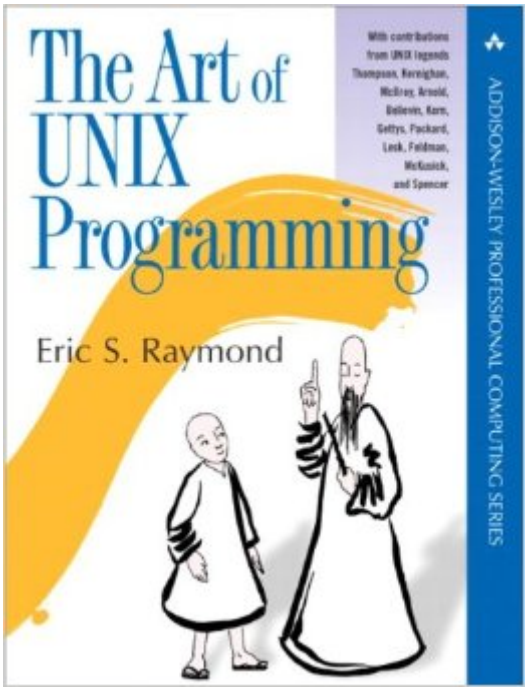
The Art Of UNIX Programming



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Synopsis

The Art of UNIX Programming poses the belief that understanding the unwritten UNIX engineering tradition and mastering its design patterns will help programmers of all stripes to become better programmers. This book attempts to capture the engineering wisdom and design philosophy of the UNIX, Linux, and Open Source software development community as it has evolved over the past three decades, and as it is applied today by the most experienced programmers. Eric Raymond offers the next generation of "hackers" the unique opportunity to learn the connection between UNIX philosophy and practice through careful case studies of the very best UNIX/Linux programs.

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Customer Reviews

Raymond does a good job of explaining the philosophy driving the Unix-style of programming. Coming from a background programming Windows, I always thought of the Unix approach (lots of abbreviated command-line utilities, mini-languages, pipes, semi-unstructured text-based process integration) as down-right primitive. However, after reading this book, I’ve started to understand the

philosophy (and the practical reasons) for adopting this approach. I'd definitely recommend this book especially to newbie programmers from the Windows or Mac (pre-OS X) worlds. That said, I do have some criticisms:One of the problems with this book is the overly partisan tone it takes - one gets the impression that absolutely nothing Microsoft has ever done is of value, but the other major desktop PC OSes (Apple, Linux) represent different forms of perfection. (At home, I run Mac OSX, RedHat Linux and Windows, and have a reasonable sense of their relative strengths and weaknesses.)So, be warned: Art of Unix Programming paints a one sided picture. The author is a well-known figure in the open source community, one of its fiercest advocates, and one of Microsoft's most vocal critics, so it might seem to strange to wish for less anti-Microsoft spin from this source. After all, the Raymond brand certainly carries with it an obligatory expectation of Windows-bashing, doesn't it?One of the only Windows design decision which Raymond doesn't condemn is the (now discontinued) .ini file format. Even the thorough-going support for object-orientation in Windows is given short-shrift: after explaining the many horrors of object-oriented programming (according to Raymond), Unix-programmers are praised as "tend[ing] to share an instinctive sense of these problems." This section ([...

The writing style of this book tends to hurt the reading experience, as Raymond trumpets his own minor achievments in the free software community. The work feels like it needed one more rewrite before being released to the public: some related sources Raymond hadn't yet read at the time of writing, and some of his advice gets repetitive.The exposition itself is not up to par with The Elements of Programming Style. Raymond tries to give a list of programming rules or principles to follow, but it reads more like a list of slogans that should be taken as axioms. While The Elements of Programming Style itself had a list of rules, the rules were well woven with each other, well defended, and they were used as a means of conveying a larger story. In Raymond's case, he relies upon the slogans in absence of such a story.Thus, the book ends up more like a list of random unrelated tips. Some very profound, like his writings on threads (which he acknowleges Mark M. Miller for his help). Others are very shallow and pointless in a book that supposes to call itself about "Art." Some of the pieces appear only to function to attack Windows, and sometimes the information about Windows is embarassingly inaccurate.One final criticism is that Raymond does not understand object-oriented programming very well and misses the point in several cases. You just need to see the popularity of Python, Java, C# (Mono), OO Perl and C++ in the Linux world to see that Raymond is off base calling OO a failed experiment. In fact, with almost any matter of opinion in the book you can feel Raymond's bias and be hit in the face with misinformation or dull

false dilemmas.

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