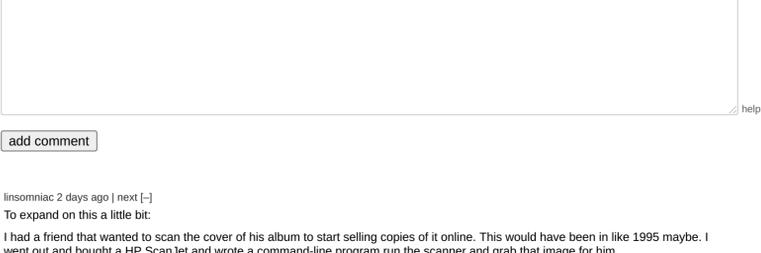


John Bradley, author of xv, has died (vxdav.net)

307 points by linsomniac 2 days ago | hide | past | favorite | 90 comments



add comment

linsomniac 2 days ago | next [-]
To expand on this a little bit:

I had a friend that wanted to scan the cover of his album to start selling copies of it online. This would have been in like 1995 maybe. I went out and bought a HP ScanJet and wrote a command-line program run the scanner and grab that image for him.

I started thinking about making a GUI companion to it. I kept thinking "I need to do this like xv does, I need to do that like xv does." I finally realized: What if I just added a scanning screen to Xv? But because of the license, I couldn't just release it as open source.

I contacted John Bradley, thinking it was probably a long shot that he'd answer. But he did, and he accepted my idea: I'd sell xv with scanning for \$50, and send him half. Real nice guy, though the majority of our interaction was me just sending him periodic checks.

I had a domain, tummy.com, because it was a fun name for a fat guy, and when I registered the domain my provider (back in the early '90s) wouldn't let me register a .org unless I was a non profit org, so I went with .com. Because of this deal with John Bradley, I registered tummy.com as an LLC to start selling this software. Over around a decade, I sent John well into the 5 digits of licensing fees. Mostly it was one-offs, but there were a few organizations where it was handfulls of copies for their site.

I had done that software in the evenings while I did a contracting gig at the Telco (USWest). When that contract was up, I was tired of working for a giant company, so I wanted to start doing Linux sys admin consulting. So I started doing that under the tummy.com brand. Did that for around 20 years until around a dozen years ago.

RIP John Bradley.

imirc 2 days ago | parent | next [-]
Great story, thanks for sharing. RIP John.

I kind of miss the age of freeware and shareware. It was often created by passionate individuals who put in a lot of care into the end product, which made it a joy to use. Once you paid for the software, you not only got the full version, but you felt good supporting someone who genuinely deserves it. There are still some examples of this, perhaps more so in the Apple ecosystem where proprietary/commercial software is the norm, but high quality software worth paying for is still rare.

Nowadays most software on Linux is open source, which is great, but the average quality is low, a lot of it is produced with little care and effort, it's quickly abandoned, and now in the age of "AI", even more so.

fooux 1 day ago | root | parent | next [-]
The spirit of it seems to live on in a few examples, such as Immich and the other software by Futo.

frankwles 1 day ago | parent | prev | next [-]
:waves: just saw tummy.com doesn't resolve anymore. End of an era for sure.

tobylane 1 day ago | root | parent | next [-]
<https://web.archive.org/web/19970211041004/http://www.tummy.com>, 1997
<https://web.archive.org/web/20030407080813/http://www.tummy.com>, 2003, a consultancy who still lists their software
<https://web.archive.org/web/20211130023259/https://www.tummy.com>, 2021 company closed

bombcar 1 day ago | root | parent | prev | next [-]
uh oh tummy!

jbells 2 days ago | parent | prev | next [-]
TIL. And good to see you on HN!

Barbing 2 days ago | parent | prev | next [-]
Wonderful share, thanks

trebligdvad 1 day ago | parent | prev | next [-]
I hope you'll keep the fish happy.

mjd 2 days ago | prev | next [-]
XV was excellent, and had some features I've never seen anywhere else. For example, it had a control panel that would allow you to take part of the color space and map it uniformly to a different part of the color space, for example, turning all the reds (and just the reds) green.

When my kid, now almost 22, was very small, she would sit on my lap in front of the computer, with XV displaying a picture of Elmo. "Green Elmo!" she would demand. I would adjust the sliders to turn the reds green, and we would laugh uproariously at green Elmo. Next it would be "Purple Elmo!", and we would laugh even harder.

This kept us both amused for quite a while.

(Update: Here's a picture of what that control panel looked like. The turn-Elmo-green control is top center. <https://xv.trilon.com/manual/xv-3.10a/color-editor-1.html>)

linsomniac 2 days ago | parent | next [-]
>a control panel

That control panel was really great! Particularly for scanning, it was nice to be able to adjust some of the color curves slightly to correct the scanned image.

However, one thing I REALLY used that control panel for was greyscale images, you could adjust the curve so that things that were barely legible in the image suddenly popped way out. Almost like that trick of rubbing a pencil across a blank page to reveal what someone wrote on the page above it. Or smaller adjustments just to make a greyscale more uniform.

That was really one of xv's superpowers.

Tor3 1 day ago | root | parent | next [-]
Indeed, I've used that feature a lot. It's so extremely simple to use, unlike figuring out how to do that in Gimp or whatever.

imirc 2 days ago | parent | prev | next [-]
There's something so appealing about those fwm window borders, aliased font, crisp graphics, and the simple and intuitive UI of xv. There's nothing jumping at you to get your attention, no ambiguous UI elements and dark patterns, just a well designed and functional GUI. We truly lost something along the way, as modern GUIs are rarely this user friendly.

mikestorrent 1 day ago | root | parent | next [-]
Wouldn't you love to see that rendered with anti-aliasing at Retina resolution, but the same on-screen real size as it was back on a 17" 800x600 monitor? I bet it would look delightful.

We have to go back

hultu 1 day ago | root | parent | next [-]
No

chasil 2 days ago | parent | prev | next [-]
The last time that I checked, XV was still in the OpenBSD ports collection. It fits well with fwm.

I actually bought a license for XV, and I have the manual.

tezza 1 day ago | parent | prev | next [-]
> take part of the color space and map it uniformly to a different part of the color space
fyi Affinity Photo has recolor and hue filters that will do just that.

I used it for my video game art.

mikepurvis 2 days ago | prev | next [-]
For others whose Linux experience is almost exclusively on the command line, xv is a desktop image viewer, capable of some basic edits:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Xv_\(software\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Xv_(software))

cloudbonsai 1 day ago | parent | next [-]
Here is a user manual of xv that contains plenty of screenshots:
<https://dav.tbl.gov/archive/NERSC/Software/xv/help/vdocs.pdf>.

I think the "Miscellaneous Ramblings" on the final page really illustrates the color of his personality:

Section 13.3: Miscellaneous Ramblings

And, of course, thanks to everyone else. If you contributed to the development of xv in some way, and I somehow forgot to put you in the big list, my humble apologies. Documentation and careful record-keeping are not my strong suits. "Heck," why do you think it takes me a year and a half to come up with a minor new release? Because, while I love to add new features to the code, I dread documenting the dumb things. Besides, we all know that writing the documentation is the hardest part of any program. Particularly when the good folks at id Software insisted upon releasing DOOM II...

And finally, thanks to all the folks who've written in from hundreds of sites world-wide. You're the ones who've made xv a real success. (Well, that's not actually true. My love of nifty user-interfaces, all the wonderful code I've gotten from the folks listed above, and the fact that xv actually serves a useful purpose (albeit "displaying pictures of naked women") are the things that have made xv a real success. You folks who've written in have given me a way to measure how successful xv is.) But I digress. Thanks!

By the way, when I last counted (in October 1992), xv was in use at 180 different Universities, and dozens of businesses, government agencies, and the like, in 27 countries on 6 of the 7 continents. Since then, I've received messages from hundreds of new sites. And xv has been spotted in Antarctica, bringing the total to 7 of 7 continents, and allowing me to claim that xv is, in fact, truly global software. That's probably a good thing. Does anybody know if there's a Unix workstation in the Space Shuttle?... :-)

Ironically, as Linux makes more inroads on the desktop, traditional Linux desktop software is falling away. A lot of it is still super useful!

anttk 1 day ago | root | parent | next [-]
Imagemagick and GraphicsMagick have a GUI with the 'display' program which can do tons of things XV did in a libre way.

mikepurvis 1 day ago | root | parent | next [-]
One small joy in switching back to Windows after almost two decades of Mac OS was getting to have Irfanview again.

waynecochran 2 days ago | prev | next [-]
Folks talk about xv in the past tense. I still use it. On AWS it is still a great way for me to view images on headless ECS instances using an X11 server on my Mac. I still use on my local Linux boxes because it has image editing features I still can not find elsewhere.

fullstop 2 days ago | prev | next [-]
Sometimes you see credits and say "Oh, wow, I didn't know that they were involved with that?"

For John Bradley, it is xv and xcalc.

For Hisham Muhammad it is htop and LuaRocks.

And for Jason Donenfeld it is wireguard and cgpt.

Perhaps some of you have other examples.

mschuster91 2 days ago | parent | next [-]
> Perhaps some of you have other examples.

The entirety of the works of Fabrice Bellard. QEMU and FFmpeg are the most well-known ones, but there's also a full blown x86 emulator fully and exclusively written in native JavaScript, a greenfield image compression format, a JS engine and probably a dozen other things I only randomly stumble upon and think "oh, wtf, another Fabrice Bellard thing?".

kstrauser 2 days ago | root | parent | next [-]
On several occasions, I've seen some outlandish claim or another on a new piece of software I've never heard of, started to roll my eyes, saw that Bellard had written it, and turned back to see what genius thing he'd come up with.

"New Halting Problem solver," ok, sure buddy, "by Fabrice Bellard," ok, so tell me how this works...

fullstop 2 days ago | root | parent | prev | next [-]
I can't even imagine being able to think like he can.

eichin 1 day ago | parent | prev | next [-]
Matthias Wandel - I'd used head for years, and I've watched "that experimental woodworking guy on youtube" for years - it was a bit of a mental "record scratch" when I realized they were actually the same guy.

somat 1 day ago | parent | prev | next [-]
Oh xcalc. My favorite xcalc hack is that every single button is an x11 window and you can reparent other windows into them.

```
xwininfo -tree
xdotool windowreparent 0x1e0000b 0x2c0001d
```

great fun at parties

Tor3 2 days ago | prev | next [-]
I still use xv daily. I paid the shareware price back in the day (I think it was \$25), and the license, if I recall correctly, was a photo of John with a thumbs-up. I've added a few patches here and there to deal with slightly more modern jpeg features and the like, and for the most part it handles everything I want to do, and the rest I do with imagemagick. For just looking at images I use xv all the time. Fast, and with some editing options as others have mentioned.

rk1 1 day ago | prev | next [-]
I mostly learned programming GUI applications, in Xwindow and in general, studying the code of xv. The GUI controls were written from scratch using X resources and the code quality was top notch. I remember printing the full source code back in the winter break of 1994 at my university printers since I was going on vacations with my family and I was going to be completely disconnected. I studied the code writing side notes every time I had a moment to relax. Good times. Many thanks, John.

protastus 2 days ago | prev | next [-]
xv is my favorite image viewer of all time. I loved how it launched immediately and made it very easy to see an image or browse a folder right from the command-line. 20 years later, computers are dramatically faster and such a fundamental task has become unbearably laggy.

mikestorrent 1 day ago | parent | next [-]
30 years later and the basic functionalities of Windows 3.1's File Manager and Word 6.0's object linking and embedding still aren't doable on the web.

smackeyacky 1 day ago | root | parent | next [-]
Did anyone usefully use OLE outside of tech demos? I have never come across it in the wild.

somat 1 day ago | root | parent | prev | next [-]
I mean, you are right, but...

It's the web, it's not supposed to get local files it gets web files and we don't ole for a reason. microsoft tried that with IE(activeX) and found out the hard way, but despite that it does a pretty good job linking and embedding javascript. to the point that they had to invent the word CORS lunacy just to slow it down.

lizknope 1 day ago | prev | next [-]
I first used xv in the early 1990's, maybe 1992. It was the first time I had used software that could edit an image. It was fun going into the color editor and adjusting the green channel or clicking "RevVid" and getting a negative inverted image.

I still use xv today when I want to print out a map on a black and white printer. It's quick to click print, greyscale, and max to shrink to fit to a sheet of paper.

I think it was during the 1997 Sojourner Mars rover NASA mission that on the first day NASA showed a pic from Mars and they used xv. It said unregistered and someone got NASA to register their copy. That always made me smile to see xv on TV

RIP John, you gave us a great piece of software that is still useful over 30 years later.

jbmadger 2 days ago | prev | next [-]
I really liked the widget set (custom made for the program) that xv used. In the 1990s it looked far more "professional" than most GUI apps on Linux/Unix in general.

jasperry 2 days ago | parent | next [-]
Even though I hadn't thought about xv in decades, as soon as I read the headline, the image of those 3d buttons with the crisp outlines resurfaced from my memory.

paulpauper 2 days ago | prev | next [-]
I am confused why this goes to a tribute page to a musician when everyone is talking about a software developer?

linsomniac 2 days ago | parent | next [-]
Originally I posted a link to a gab article that extensively discussed the software developer side of John as well as the musician side, but it has been decided to replace it with a link that only mentions the musician side.

mjd 2 days ago | parent | prev | next [-]
Most people are more than one person.

tzs 2 days ago | parent | prev | next [-]
So far only two linkable reports of his death have been found. The other is on a Twitter-like site that is so full of anti-semitic, white nationalist, and similar content and has so little of anything else that it makes Twitter look like a far left hang out.

Bradley wrote xv a long time ago and appears to be better known for his later work, including his music. Here's how he described himself on Soundcloud [1]:

> Guitar player, music producer, graphic designer, and "that guy who wrote XV" a very long time ago.

Moderators replaced that link with one to vxdav.com, where it was posted by someone who was a friend and friend of Bradley. Looking at that site it also seems rather out there, but it isn't a social media site. It is the site of Theodore Beale, a rather controversial writer and former video game developer [2].

The crucial difference is at the original site, being a Twitter-like social media site, if you scroll down you get a bunch of other posts they are promoting.

At the current link, the page is just about John Bradley. There are links to other things on the site but they at most suggest that the site is probably quite a bit outside the mainstream.

Compare to the original site. After scrolling past the posting about Bradley and 3 comments on that posting you get to section showing recent postings from the paid version of the site that they have chosen to promote, presumably to convince you to upgrade to the paid option.

Here's what it gave me.

- Someone saying they drive 5 miles to get gas from a white owned station instead of the one down the street from them, because an Indian is behind the counter.

- One about how the US was founded 100% by white Europeans and was 80-90% white for 200 years, and it is the flood of third world trash that is tearing down America. (In the replies to this one we learn that the real problem is the Jews who are the ones enabling this).

- Someone who says his radicalizing friend was when a non-citizen ahead of him in line at urgent without insurance was treated for free. (He would have been treated for free too if he did not have insurance, BHW).

- Someone saying any shortages of a variety of things are being fabricated. The comments of course mention that it is the Jews and the "bitches" that are doing the fabrication. Also blacks (whose presence in white countries is facilitated by Jews). Also, there is no such thing as a fossil fuel--oil is abundant and continuously replenished but this info is being buried.

- Kirk, a picture of Charlie Kirk and a quote by him. Nothing wrong with this one. The comments on it however...One wonders how the ones that killed Kirk, Kirk was actually a Mossad agent, Kirk is not dead, several hinting at dark thing about his wife (and it's Jewish where he could have married her since she is a Catholic).

- Another one that doesn't seem bad until you get to the comments. It says that we are not trillion in debt, we are trillions in fraud. The comments let it know that this is what happens when Jews take over your country. Also blames Democrats because they can't count on the base (blacks, illegals, gays) so they have to steal. There is one that says 30% of the debt is attributable to Trump and then in 5 years Trump added more to the debt than Obama in 8 but it is near the bottom when sorted by likes so does not appear to be a popular sentiment there.

- A picture of a sticker which says his face is being placed on gas pumps around the country. The sticker shows a man dressed like an Orthodox Jew, with a grin on his face and the stereotypical "Jewish nose" [3] that has been used in anti-Jewish caricatures since the 13th century. He is pointing the side, which if you place the sticker correctly would be pointing toward the price on the gas pump. The text on the sticker says "THE JEWS DID THIS!". Plenty of agreement in the comments, and people noting these stickers should be on a lot more than gas pumps.

- Another one about Jews trying to destroy western civilization. Mentions Jews supported Black Lives Matter and immigrant rights. Some new craziness in the comments, like Trump is a free mason in the synagogue of god. So this is the tip of the iceberg.

I'm only halfway down the page at this point, and it will automatically load more the farther I go so this is just the tip of the iceberg. It is no wonder that the submission with that URL got user flagged.

[1] <https://soundcloud.com/john-bradley-298288478>

[2] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vox_Day

[3] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_nose

cwyers 1 day ago | root | parent | next [-]
I was wondering why HN was linking to Vox Day. The answer "because the alternative is worse" is probably the most justifiable one I can think of.

kstrauser 2 days ago | root | parent | prev | next [-]
Thanks for taking the time to distill that. I saw the same there. When I say that Gab is a dumpster fire, I don't mean that some people there have political positions that I don't personally agree with. I mean that it's packed full of utterly vile content. This isn't some hangout for the likes of George Will and conservative intellectuals, saying calm, rational things that violate the "woken agenda" or such.

zeusdclxvi 1 day ago | root | parent | prev | next [-]
Almost everything on the sidebar of vox day's site is a dead link too

ike1 2 days ago | root | parent | prev | next [-]
The current site "vxdav" also claims a lot of Trump is "fake" as in, not the real Trump. Odd, I guess that's one of the delusions of the schizo-phrenic part of the far right?

Rebelgecko 1 day ago | root | parent | next [-]
He was a big Qanon guy at one point too

mrlonglong 2 days ago | prev | next [-]
Xv! A true blast from the past. A much unappreciated piece of software

kristopolous 2 days ago | prev | next [-]
He was still accepting shareware payment for it on his website, which I think is amazing... <https://xv.trilon.com/>

lysave 2 days ago | prev | next [-]
xv was very neatly and cleverly designed. I liked it a lot in the 90s. Still somehow remember his name.

jpnpj 2 days ago | parent | next [-]
saw a screenshot as I was reading this article, made me eager to try it, and it's indeed simple, slick and featured... elegant look and feel for a different age.

lysave 2 days ago | root | parent | next [-]
Here's two screenshots:
<https://snapcraft.io/xv>

jpnpj 2 days ago | root | parent | next [-]
Reminds me of the 90s cgi scene, softimage, lightwave3d

lysave 2 days ago | root | parent | next [-]
It uses raw Xlib to implement a custom widget toolkit. Yeah, it does feel Amiga-ish.

A button (links to the github link, em-bee):
<https://github.com/jasper-software/xv/blob/main/src/xvbutt.c>

em-bee 2 days ago | root | parent | prev | next [-]
you can try it. a few years ago some people picked up maintenance: <https://github.com/jasper-software/xv>

i just built it on my machine. works!

jpnpj 7 hours ago | root | parent | next [-]
it's available on arch aur too, a quick build away and ready to serve

latchkey 2 days ago | prev | next [-]
There is a mention of tummy.com and a link, but it is owned by Evelyn Mitchell.

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/evelynmitchell/>

linsomniac 2 days ago | parent | next [-]
I am that man at the Usenix conference.

latchkey 2 days ago | root | parent | next [-]
Cool, are you related to tummy then? I'm just trying to clear up my own confusion.

linsomniac 2 days ago | root | parent | next [-]
As much as anybody these days, since tummy.com shut down 3-5 years ago. I left a dozen years ago. I'm the one that wrote the scanning extensions to xv that were mentioned in the posted article. Evelyn and I were co-owners for the first ~22 years.

latchkey 2 days ago | root | parent | next [-]
Oh wow, thanks for the context and your work!

natas 1 day ago | prev | next [-]
I've used xv from the mid-nineties until now, I still have it on my desktop, it's been 30 years, there's just no viable replacement IMHO.

charcircuit 2 days ago | prev | next [-]
The original link of this thread was to: <https://gab.com/markoffreeman/posts/116290669616400528>

kstrauser 2 days ago | parent | next [-]
Eww. Too bad interesting news comes from such a vile source. (This is the message below that as I writer this: <https://gab.com/discos/posts/116293438874138531>)

Rebelgecko 1 day ago | root | parent | next [-]
Vox Day isn't any better

kstrauser 1 day ago | root | parent | next [-]
I think it's less bad, but understand that I don't exactly mean that as an endorsement. The lesser evil's still pretty awful. It's just that the greater evil here goes above and beyond.

HoldOnAMinute 2 days ago | prev | next [-]
I was blown away when I discovered xv in the early 90's. Coming from Deluxe Paint and Photon Paint, I was very impressed.

tibbydudea 2 days ago | prev | next [-]
I made the massive mistake of scrolling down - something vile and worse than X.

JoshTriplett 2 days ago | parent | next [-]
Yeah, we should not be linking to gab and its ilk here.

Link has since been replaced and I didn't catch the gab link, but yikes, the new site is also filled with conspiracy peddling [1] and, even worse, blatant Russia apologetism [2].

[1] <https://voxday.net/tag/immigration/>

[2] <https://voxday.net/tag/russia/>

cdwhite 2 days ago | root | parent | next [-]
Vox Day may be a familiar name to folks who were paying attention to the SF / fantasy world tenish years ago: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vox_Day

wk_end 2 days ago | root | parent | next [-]
Between Gab and Vox Day, is no one else writing about this guy except the extreme right? Is there not a better source available?

I've been wondering about that as well. It appears he & Vox Day were friends/collaborators and may have shared some political views: <https://postcardsfromtheageofreason.com/2026/03/01/hpr/>

[reply](#)

BobBagwill 2 days ago | root | parent | next [-]

good athlete != good person

good actor != good person

good writer != good person

good programmer != good person

good person != nice person

nice person != talented person

TANJ TANSTAAFL SLATFATF

[reply](#)

microtherion 2 days ago | root | parent | next [-]

He may have been a bit of a Milkshake Duck

[reply](#)

krapp 1 day ago | root | parent | prev | next [-]

How many sources for the man's death would there be? It seems his only notability is writing a piece of software that let's be frank not even most Linux users have heard of and fronting a band that from what I can tell primarily appeals to incels and neo-nazis and only seems to have 16 listeners on Spotify.

People like this only get "better sources" when they go on a shooting spree.

[reply](#)

nickdothutton 2 days ago | prev | next [-]

xv was fast, stable, had a good interface, and useful far beyond the normal lifespan of such a piece of software. Used it all the time in the early 90s.

[reply](#)

gyc 2 days ago | prev | next [-]

visual schnauzer

[reply](#)

jfb 1 day ago | prev | next [-]

Oh man. I used to use xv a lot. RIP, John.

[reply](#)

fdelfilippo 2 days ago | prev | next [-]

ciao John!

[reply](#)

toomuchtodo 2 days ago | prev | next [10 more]

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