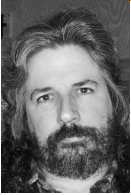


ROBERT G. FERRELL

/dev/random



Robert G. Ferrell is an information security geek biding his time until that genius grant finally comes through.

rgferrell@gmail.com

ONE MAJOR STEPPING STONE ALONG the Möbius path to Compleat UNIX Systems Administrator is mastering command-line editors. I've steadfastly avoided getting involved in the vi versus Emacs holy wars, since I never saw any real reason to learn Emacs and thus am quite comfortable in my raging ignorance of this tool. Even though I've been using vi for well over twenty-five years now, I still on occasion stumble over options and commands I've never before encountered (or, more accurately, never found any utility in memorizing). In honor of my 51st birthday, which will be nothing but an Islay-clouded memory by the time this column goes to press, I have dug out some ancient notes on an early version of vi known as vi (not), translated them from Pig-Sanskrit, and here elucidate them in the familiar form of a man page for your edification and entertainment.

VI (NOT) (-1)

VI (NOT) (-1)

NAME

vi (not), vi bother, *%#\$!

DESCRIPTION

Vi (not) is a screen-disoriented text “editor” intended for use by people who think GUIs can be found buried on beaches in New England or are candy products popular with the toddler demographic. If you were not alive during the Vietnam conflict and you still insist on using *vi (not)*, you're either a poser or a TPL (Typophilic Pseudo-Lud-dite). Your brain does not work the way everyone else's does, and so you must be isolated for the good of society. Fortunately, that problem usually resolves itself.

The following command-line options are available (may not be functional in months with an “r” or if your compiler can't handle ALGOL 68):

- w Execute *init 0* a random number of seconds after startup. Part of a wisely abandoned early Windows simulator.
- g Start editing in Groucho mode. Quacks every time the secret Key of the Day (KOTD) is pressed.

- R Copy a random system file into the screen buffer on startup. Garnish with celery and serve on a chilled plate.
- |n Pipe every *n*th word to *smsclient*.
- s Start editing in *scavenger hunt* mode, where the edited file is saved in a random directory and filename.
- ?!! Save the specified file to a location, or, if not available, save some file to a place specified that would have been available if the specified location had been available and not specified.
- S Run with the ultra-secure edit option set, disallowing all access to everything. Forever.
- xxx We sort of forgot what this one does. It's bound to be interesting, though.
- p Start editing in the previously opened document.
- n Start editing in a document you might want to edit in the future.
- F Start editing in an actual functional editor (not implemented).

The commands to move around in the file, if you do manage to get one open, are:

- 1 + ! Move the cursor left one character.
- 2 + @ Move the cursor down one line.
- 3 + # Move the cursor up one line.
- + + = Move the cursor right one character.
- !*\$ Move the cursor over behind the fridge.

The commands to enter new text are:

- { Append new text somewhere in the document.
- <> Insert new text, oh, about midway through the next paragraph.
- (o) Open a new line below the line the cursor is on. Watch YouTube. Rinse and repeat.
- [@] Open a new line above the line the cursor is on, then go read your email.

Note: If standard input is not a terminal, vi (not) will read commands from it regardless; however, it will mock the user mercilessly and use uucp to tell all its friends what a loser you are.

ENVIRONMENT VARIABLES

FONT

If set, vi (not) uses a font. Maximum flow rate is 42 gpm, unless the *-niagara* flag is set when compiling.

EXCUSE

A list of implausible reasons vi (not) didn't start up this time, either.

HOME

The user's home directory, where all the error messages, temp files, core dumps, and spurious gibberish accumulates.

LINES

An alleged professional American football team.

SHELL

Your ordnance of choice.

TERN

An aquatic bird known for diving after fish and pooping on piers.

See also

frags(100), smores(0), curses(666), kill(-9)