An Austrumi Assessment

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Austrumi Linux 0.9.5

[4]Austrumi [5] is a Latvian Linux distribution, with support for English, presented in a 48mb iso, based on Slackware Linux [6] using Blin [7] init scripts. Austrumi released version 0.9.5 earlier this month, and included a 2.6.11 kernel and FVWM. It comes with a variety of applications for daily tasks and looks good doing it.

Its requirements include:

- CPU - Intel-compatible (pentium or later);
- RAM - at least 96 MB for X implimentation;
- HD - not needed;
- CD-ROM - bootable CD-ROM drive.

Some included applications are:

- Graphic
    - gqview - image browser
    - gimp - Image Manipulation Program
    - inkscape - SVG editor
- Office
    - gcalctool - graphical calculator
    - abiword - word processor

- gnumeric - spreadsheet editor
- stardict - dictionary
- bluefish - html editor
- gv - a PostScript and PDF previewer
- Internet
  - firefox - WWW browser
  - gftp - ftp client
  - skype - free internet telephony
  - gitmail - mail client
  - apache - Web server
  - vsftpd - ftp server
  - xmail - mail server
- Other
  - emelfm - file manager
  - gtkfind - graphical file finding program
  - rxvt - color VT102 terminal emulator
  - LinNeighborhood - samba client

[8]Austrumi's default language is Latvian but my first look around wasn't hindered a great deal due to the icons and pics included. However, I was quite relieved to discover the English option in the menu. "Sakt"->"Sistema"->"leslegt anglu" to be exact. Once enabled, Austrumi seems more usable to the average English speaking person like myself. Even better than that perhaps was the discovery of how wonderful the fonts look. Do I dare say Austrumi has the best looking default fonts I've seen in a distro since pclos or mandriva? They were just gorgeous, even in Firefox. I tried to discover their secret, but was unsuccessful during my short excursion. I will probably be revisiting that quest by and by.

More strking than the nice desktop or the beautiful fonts was the blazing fast performance. I've never experienced anything like the speed of Austrumi. Even used in it's livecd format, this operating system was breaking landspeed records. When have you ever known gimp or firefox to open in about 2 seconds? My hardware is a 2800+ Barton on a KT400 mobo with 512 mb ddr ram, a mid-performance machine at best. This performance must be in part because Austrumi caches the entire cd into memory. (As an added bonus, this enables Austrumi to release the cd and free up the drive for other uses.) Due to this wonderful discovery, I was quite interested in it's hard drive install application.

[9]One word on that hard drive installer: **DON'T!** Don't do it. Drop the mouse and step back away from the keyboard. I thought the interface seemed a bit primative and sparce. I felt a sense of foreboding, but being *Me*, I continued anyway. I chose to use my last unused partition, /dev/hda20. I highlighted it from the menu and told it to put lilo on it's root (as there seemed to be no option to skip it). It preceded to wipe out my hda1 and my windows XP install. Sure, not a major loss and the rest of my data and systems were intact, but still I'd rather had it install where I wanted. In fact, it didn't install at all. All it installed was a lost&found file on hda1. Shame shame shame. A destructive application should not be included in the menu until it's at least almost operative. Austrumi lost major points for this faux pas.

Another strike against Austrumi in my book, and this is perhaps a personal choice, was the mounting all my partitions automagically. I have an aversion to distros doing that. This is a formula for disaster. What if one has to hit reset? And I did.

I had to hit reset one boot tho the system didn't seem entirely unresponsive, none of the menu items worked and commands in the terminal just seemed to stagnate. They just sat there unexecuted. All the usual get-out-unscathed techniques failed. In addition, X crashed more than once and several applications crashed out a few times. One boot, gimp wouldn't open at all.

The boot process is based on the Blin operating system. When I booted the first time, I struggled to recognize it. It was refreshing to see a mini not use knoppix or damn small as their base and noticed it's hardware detection was doing a wonderful job. But I just couldn't put my finger on it. Reading the sparce website [5], I discovered it credited Blin [7] with it's startup scripts. After boot one can look around and recognize some telltail signs that it has its roots in Slackware. However many basic commandline tools and commands were missing and made things a tad more challenging.

 [10]The final strike is its network connection setup. In today's Linux world, one almost expects the internet connection to work upon boot. If the machine is on a lan behind a router, one can set up their connection fairly easily with 3 short commands, or fortunately there is netconfig in the menu. One can setup a static, dhcp, or ppp connection, although the static setup didn't set up the gateway, so the connection didn't work. The dhcp method seems to work just fine.

In summation, Austrumi has some wonderful features going for it, but it also has several issues it needs to address. I found it nice looking with fantastic fonts and speed, but it also seemed a bit buggy and slightly destructive. I'll keep an eye on this distro, but three strikes and you're out this inning. I doubt I'll ever try to install to my harddrive using its installer again. ...now where did I put that xp install disk and my linux boot floppy?

Screenshots [11] in the gallery.

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Source URL: http://www.tuxmachines.org/node/1040

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