MiniSlack is no mini Slack

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[4]I have mentioned on more than one occasion that Slackware is one of my most favorite Linux distributions. So when on Friday, June 10, it was announced that [Minislack 1.1 is ready](#) [5], I thought this would be a good time to install and test this mini version. But is MiniSlack a mini Slack?

According to the [site](#) [6], this version introduces the fast and reliable Reiser4 filesystem, NPTL support, and "netpkg" : a user friendly package management and update tool.

Main updates are Kernel-2.6.11.10, Xfce-4.2.2, Openoffice 2.0b (available via netpkg), Mozilla-Firefox-1.0.4, Gaim-1.3.0, Gnumeric-1.4.3, Gxine-0.4.5, Bluefish-1.0.1. A lot of minor updates are also provided, please take a look at the changelog for details.

The XFCE desktop has been redesigned for a modern and sober look&feel with SVG icons.

Consulting the [website](#) [7] we can find this wonderful **Overview**:

Minislack Linux aims to be focused on Internet application, multimedia and coding tools. It's a complete system : this means that, out of the box, you will be able to browse, mail, chat, listen to music, program in C, Perl, Python, Ruby,.. watch videos in various formats, write documents, print, scan, burn CD and DVD, connect your camera and edit your photographs, without adding anything. Coders will like the full set of development libraries and interpreters.

Minislack has the following objectives :

- Be simple, fast, secure and reliable
- Provide one application for one task
- Be a complete development/desktop environment
- Be small so that it can be distributed on a single 400MB ISO image

Some features of the current version are :

- Kernel(2.6.11.10) with support for reiser4, USB, scsi, acpi, pcmcia, bluetooth, Framebuffer, sata, cpufreq...
- gcc(3.3.5),JRE(1.5.0_01), Python(2.4.1),Perl(5.8.6),Ruby(1.8.2)
- XFCE(4.2.2), Gnome-libs(2.10)
- Mozilla-firefox(1.0.4)/thunderbird(1.0.2), Abiword(2.2.7), Gnumeric(1.4.3), Dia(0.94),
- Gimp(2.2.6), Openoffice (1.9.104)
- Anjuta(1.2.2), Bluefish(1.0.1), Leafpad(0.8.1), Gvim(6.3)
- Alsa(1.0.8), Gxine(0.4.5), Gnomebaker(0.3), Beep-media-player(0.9.7)

Sounded good, I could hardly wait to pop in my cd. I was greeted by the familiar Slackware installer, albeit a differing color scheme. Picking out a keymap, defining a swap partition, and partitioning (or designating) a root start the install. A few questions about fstab and whether to include your windows partitions then it was off. I usually just say install everything, as I did this time. With MiniSlack this amounted to 1.1 gig of software. It installed in about a 1/2 hour and finished up by asking some configuration questions. Did I want to set up the network, yes. Did I want to set a root password, yes. Which deamons did I want started at boot...

Then I booted and my adventure began. The system booted fine except for an error about the sound, something about oss. I thought it was to use alsa - I guess the compatibility modules. Perhaps this is something that needs configuring, I wasn't too worried yet. So, usually the first thing I do with a fresh install is make my user and install nvidia graphic drivers. Well, useradd went without a hitch, but the drivers are another story.

First I had an error - something about a missing or incorrect manifest.file. I remembered seeing that before on my alinux install and a bell went off. What did those two installs have in common? Reiser4! So, I reformatted my hda12 as reiserfs (3) and reinstalled MiniSlack. This time the manifest file error was gone, but it complained about the kernel I had downloaded from kernel.org not matching the running kernel. Upon investigation on MiniSlack's forum, I found they provide a kernel source in their repository, so I netpkg kernelsource. Well, it still didn't install those drivers - as I recall it still shot the same error about the headers or source not matching the running kernel - I don't know, it's beginning to all turn into a horrifying blur by now. I messed with it and messed with passing this flag and trying that option to no avail. After what seemed like most of the day, I gave up and started X using vesa.

 [8]

The video troubles didn't end there. I was busy checking out the menu/included apps and trying to decide what to say about this and that while I took my screenshots for this article. I like xfce, it's a nice, pretty, and fairly complete window manager. The fonts were pretty even under vesa. I tried grip that seemed to work and gimp also functioned as expected. Xfsamba functioned really well. Tar segfaulted several times while trying to unarchive the kernel source (I even tried uncompressing it first). The image viewer couldn't decode the jpegs I had shot so far but gxine was the worse. It did open avi files and play one movie I had on disc, but another avi caused it to exit fairly early on (started from menu - so unknown was the error). I walked away to start supper and X had caught a signal 11 by the time I had returned. I had left no applications open and was gone only long enough to get my supper on the stove.

[9]

That's when I decided MiniSlack was no mini Slack and rebooted my beloved Gentoo. I usually scrap the review idea if I have such bad results, but I had invested my entire Sunday off on this distribution because I wanted it to work so badly. I'm sorry I can't report better results. I'm sure the developers are working hard and there are probably people out there having wonderful results with MiniSlack. I, for one, was greatly disappointed. For an approximately 450 mb download making a 1.1 gig install, I found the included applications sparse. It goes without saying that I found MiniSlack unstable and quite lacking. All I can say is keep trying guys. But for now, no, MiniSlack is no mini Slack.

Screenshots [10] available.

UPDATE: Please see my commentary [11] and an opposing viewpoint [12] for more information.

UPDATE 2: Please see my more recent review on Zenwalk 1.3 [13].

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