For the best in today's fashions: Frugalware

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[4]The development release of Frugalware Linux 0.3 Pre1 was announced [5] on distrowatch [6] June 23, 2005, not quite two months after the stable 0.2 was released. This distribution, famed in prose and song, ...well, maybe not prose and song, but it certainly is getting the e-press. For a developmental project, it's winning hearts and minds scarcely paralleled in the competitive Linux distribution market today. I was curious as to why Frugalware was getting so much attention, so I installed their newest release and now think I have some idea.

Stable .1.0 was released November 2, 2004 and little over a year later, the developers plan to unleash stable .3.0. If this week's pre1 is any indication, there will no stopping these guys from taking more than their fair share of the market. Frugalware's Philosophy states that "We try to make Frugalware as simple as possible while not forgetting to keep it comfortable. We try to ship fresh and stable software, as close to the original source as possible, because in our opinion most software is the best as is, doesn't needs patching." It is summed up as "simplicity, multimedia, design." Borrowing elements from Slackware and Arch is a good foundation, and they have done wonderful things with it. The installer looks very much like an expanded Slackware installer, and the init reminds me of Slacks as well. They include many desktop/window managers and a nice package management application. Installation media usually includes i686 and x86_64 two cd sets and a dvd version as well as a net iso, although I don't see x86_64 versions on mirrors yet for this latest. They claim Frugalware is for intermediate users, but if not for the fdisk/cfdisk step, it could very well be easy enough for a complete newcomer.

The installer was a complete joy. One is greeted by a lovely boot splash and "enter" is most likely all that's required. Then the almost familiar looking Slackware installer presents itself. It has the look, but if memory serves, much more detail. One first picks their language and is then greeted by a nice welcome message from the developers where they

state their goal is help folks "work faster and simpler". After choosing a keyboard map and waiting for hard drive detection, it's time to choose your hard drive from a list and fdisk/cfdisk if needed. Then define your swap, /, and other partitions, let it format, and pick your package catagories. As I commonly do on testing systems, I just selected "OK" as it appeared 'everything' was chosen by default. A little ways into the install, the installer asks about grub. I had it put it on floppy as I wanted to edit and run lilo from my main desktop later. As it churned away installing all the software, I noticed the kernel sources being installed and a quick make being run on it. This was encouraging and gave me high hopes for the success of the nvidia graphic driver installation after first boot. A cd change and more packages being install followed. After what seemed like a short installation time, it was time for configuration. Root password and user set up was first, followed by another unique feature of the install. One is given the opportunity to input some specific details of each user if they so desire such as Full Name, Room Number, Work Phone, Home Phone and any other details you want to include. I may have led a sheltered life, but this was the first time I can recall seeing an installer do that. Then one finishes up by configuring their network, mouse and X. Now it was time to boot!

[7]The boot process was in some respects the usual Linux routine, however the verbose splash background was the best I've seen yet. A wonderfully tasteful background of pleasing color and design is used. I had hoped to find it offered as a wallpaper upon login. The silent splash is a little busy, but has nice colors as well. Frugalware defaults to a graphically login, but wanting to install graphic drivers, I used the append at my lilo prompt of init 3. I mounted my archive partition and ran the nvidia installer. The drivers built and installed as designed with not so much as a hiccup. I put "/sbin/modprobe nvidia" in the /etc/rc.d/rc.modules file and rebooted. Not that rebooting is necessary, I just wanted to make sure they would load as hoped. They did and I was greeted by the graphical user login. My first test drive was of kde. KDE 3.4.1 is included [8] in this release and a little bit of tinkering here and there was enough to have a beautiful desktop. I didn't find the image I had hoped for, but found a great looking Frugalware wallpaper here [9]. A little adjustment of the fonts and colors and I felt right at home.

KDE not your cup of tea? Well, you won't have any trouble finding your desktop of choice in Frugalware. I reckon they include about every window manager and desktop environment available.

 [10]   [11]

 [12]   [13]

 [14]   [15]

Frugalware uses Pacman [16] for its package management and this was my first experience [17] with it. I tested it out installing

[18] and <u>uninstalling</u> [19]. It did appear to function quite well, <u>updating the source lists</u> [20], downloading applications and dependencies, then <u>installing them</u> [21]. It reminded me of synaptic in appearance - and in operation. No problems.

Some of the included updates are:

- KDE 3.4.1
- GCC 3.4.4
- Linux kernel 2.6.12

Some of the improvements listed on Frugalware's <u>site</u> [22] include:

- Added a new tool: repoman. It helps you to compile packages from source, allowing to automatically create and install closed-source packages like realplayer or skype (repoman merge packagename). Also it allows you to download all package's buildscript (repoman update) and recompile them with your compiler flags, "a la Gentoo".
- Our build system now supports more than one architecture which means you can expect an x86_64 preview release soon.
- All packages got their group, so that if you installed only a base system, you can install all network-related packages with pacman -S network and so.
- Created a new config tool: wificonfig, to configure your wireless connection.
- The KDE menu changed a bit: now most installed non-kde applications should apper in the menu, too.
- Localized Thunderbird and added localized spellcheck support.
- The gimp-print printer drivers replaced with the foomatic ones, wich means we support much more printers now.
- Packaged the rox desktop environment.
- New web <u>interface</u> [23] for viewing informations about packages.

In summation, I found Frugalware to be a complete joy from start to finish. It was fast and stable in basic operation and I found the included apps the same. Not one problem was encountered. Their isos include a full range of latest versions of packages avaiable. The package manager is already setup ready to use upon install (save for a quick sync) and performs wonderfully. Hardware detection was spot-on accurate and <u>multimedia applications</u> [24] were fully functional and stable. I'd almost dare to say that perhaps Frugalware is the most trouble-free distro available at this time. If you only see one movie this year - make it Frugalware!

 [25]

<u>Screenshots</u> [26] in the <u>gallery</u> [27]!

<u>Linux</u> <u>Reviews</u> <u>-s</u>

Source URL: <u>http://www.tuxmachines.org/node/1501</u>

Links:
[1] http://www.tuxmachines.org/taxonomy/term/63
[2] http://www.tuxmachines.org/taxonomy/term/101
[3] http://www.tuxmachines.org/taxonomy/term/102
[4] http://www.tuxmachines.org/gallery/frugal/desktop

[5] http://distrowatch.com/?newsid=02745#0

[6] http://www.distrowatch.com

[7] http://www.tuxmachines.org/gallery/frugal/1stdesktop

[8] http://www.tuxmachines.org/gallery/kcontrol

[9] http://frugalware.org/~nadfoka/

[10] http://www.tuxmachines.org/gallery/frugal/enlightenment4

[11] http://www.tuxmachines.org/gallery/frugal/gnome

[12] http://www.tuxmachines.org/gallery/frugal/xfce1

[13] http://www.tuxmachines.org/gallery/frugal/windowmaker1

[14] http://www.tuxmachines.org/gallery/frugal/openbox2

[15] http://www.tuxmachines.org/gallery/frugal/blackbox

[16] http://www.archlinux.org/pacman/

[17] http://www.tuxmachines.org/gallery/frugal/packagemgr1

[18] http://www.tuxmachines.org/gallery/frugal/packagemgr8

[19] http://www.tuxmachines.org/gallery/frugal/packagemgr2

[20] http://www.tuxmachines.org/gallery/frugal/packagemgr7

[21] http://www.tuxmachines.org/gallery/frugal/packagemgr10

[22] http://frugalware.org/news.php

[23] http://frugalware.org/packages.php

[24] http://www.tuxmachines.org/gallery/frugal/mplayer2

[25] http://www.tuxmachines.org/gallery/frugal/bye

[26] http://www.tuxmachines.org/gallery/frugal

[27] http://www.tuxmachines.org/gallery