Looking back on my experiences with AlmaLinux, there was such a lot of ground covered in under a week and with such varied results. Getting started was a painful experience. The release announcement for AlmaLinux OS 9.0 talks about multiple editions which do not (at the time of writing) exist, cutting off avenues of testing live media and running the distribution on Raspberry Pi computers. The torrent I tried to download was incomplete and there are some key pieces of documentation missing that I had to find upstream. To make matters worse, Anaconda is one of the least friendly graphical installers I have used in recent years with awkwardly placed controls and overly complicated screens.

Once I was up and running, there were several problems on the desktop side of things. GNOME on Wayland is relatively slow and had some problems compared to the GNOME on X11 session, automatic updates are slow and interrupt the flow of using the system. It feels like a functional step backwards to be using a Windows-like update system which is less convenient than virtually any other Linux distribution of the past two decades. To top it off, I couldn't get the Totem player to play videos (despite the software centre claiming I had the proper codecs) and VLC wouldn't play sound, though it works fine on other distributions on the same hardware.

I'm sure some people will write to me to point out AlmaLinux is not primarily intended to be used as a workstation platform, its main duty is as a server distribution. I agree with this idea, but the project claims (inaccurately, it seems) to offer live desktop editions of AlmaLinux and the system installer has multiple workstation and "Server with GUI" roles we can select. Running as a desktop system might not be the distribution's primary role, but it is one which is advertised and encouraged. Running GNOME is even the default role selected by Anaconda, so it would be foolish to overlook how the distribution functions in this, its default role.

Reviews

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