OpenSUSE 10.3 final is due out in just a few days, so let's take a look at the progress. Folks have been testing this release candidate and posting their thoughts here and there. My own testing was delayed primarily due to the some of the joys of running Gentoo fulltime, but I was finally able to devote my full attention to openSUSE 10.3 RC1. As per my usual, I downloaded the DVD iso delta. This time it was 422 MB. I don't usually test everything with these developmental releases, but what I have tested is looking good.

The only thing I spotted new during the install phase was the names of some of my devices had changed, such as my sound and wireless chips, hinting that some work had been done to the hardware database. My sound still functioned, the modules used were the same, so perhaps it was just more precise naming. My winnic shows up during install, but I still have to wait until I can install and use Ndiswrapper. Once that is installed, I can edit the device in Yast2 and configure it to use ndiswrapper in the module textarea. Then my wireless device is available at boot.

Well, I did notice that the release notes had been updated and are being completed for the final release. The first new thing mentioned concerns the text install. It says its scope is limited, so you'll really need to go through the package selections to have a more complete system besides a minimal install. Also, it now warns users that Gaim has been replaced by Pidgin and users are given another route when trying to install onto disks with more than 15 partitions. Now we can switch to a virtual console before the partitioning step and issue the command `activate_dm_linear /dev/sdaX`. I didn't test that option this release, but I probably will for my final review. Another new topic is the change from cryptoloop to dm-crypt and its ramifications. mDNSResponder is now replaced by Avahi. And finally there are some instructions for those using older Intel graphics for a new default driver change when upgrading if they wish to use some of the more advanced options. All the rest we've covered before.
Since I couldn't setup online update sources during the install and I hadn't had much luck with previous betas, the first thing I tested was the Online Update Repository configuration and Update tool. This time it worked really well. In fact, one of the advantages of having to wait a few days before testing is that there were several updated packages available - one of which was a new kernel. Some others were kmps and glibc. I updated all the packages as recommended and rebooted when told. The system booted into the new kernel without much notice from me. The Grub menu had been updated to reflect the new kernel, but that was only real sign. The significance being this is the way it should be. I shouldn't be confronted with a Grub screen with a lot of dead links, a system that no longer boots, or hardware that no longer works. Kernel upgrades are still one of the areas that gives users a feeling of dread, but perhaps those that use openSUSE can be spared that. The only problem that developed was the disappearance of the update applet icon after logging out of and back into KDE. It remained in GNOME.

Next I tested the Software Manager. This release I didn't change the default software selection during the install, so I installed many packages afterwards. First was the small task of installing Ndiswrapper, but later came the bigger task of installing the GNOME and XFCE desktops and the KDE 4 base system. All installed without error or incident, most from the DVD but two from the online updates repo.

Speaking of GNOME, this release candidate ships with 2.19.92, but the final 2.20 has since become available here [8]. 2.20 will be included in the final.

By default openSUSE included several games and a couple of applications from the KDE 4 line-up. They all looked great and worked well as far as I could test here. Installing the KDE 4 base system puts a KDE 4 Preview option into the login manager menu. This release I could actually get into the environment and look around a bit. The menu didn't work for me, but I was able to right click the desktop and launch an app or two. In the upper left corner of the desktop is a Desktop Toolbox widget that I suppose will have lots of desktop configuration and functionality options, but now it will launch the analog clock, system tray and taskbar. These appear as widgets on the desktop. The clipboard is in a window right now. Dolphin is launchable from the Run Command box and it seems to work fairly well. Basically, preview is precisely what it is. It's not usable, but it was my first look around. It will whet your appetite, but it still makes one wonder if KDE 4 will even be ready for Christmas.

Also new in this release is the extended multimedia support. By support I mean, for example, if you try to view a site or watch a video a dialog box will appear asking if you'd like to search for suitable codecs. Click yes to open a browser at software.opensuse.org where suggestions are made and ymp file is offered for the KDE or GNOME environments. Click on this file to open a wizard similar to the software manager through which additional plugins and codecs will be installed. This includes several such as java, flash, and the win32codecs. This is kind of nice, but I think the developers should write this to spare the users of having to use the website. Just click yes to download the ymp file would be much more convenient.

The Most Annoying Bugs list has dwindled down to just a few entries:

* Online update opens an annoying popup with the progress. We'll prepare an online update for it, so it will only affect the first update (Bug #326247)
* On some machines we have problems with the kernel and ACPI - investigating, more data would be helpful
* GNOME is not yet final - we will update this right after RC1 and prepare a RC2. This one will be made internally,
but you can get the update through Factory
* 32bit PPC machines have a problem with dependencies that try to install 64bit RPMs.
I did find that suspend to disk still worked really well, but suspend to ram was broke.

Some of the Changelog highlights include:

++++ udev:
- add /dev/lp0 to static devices (nbz#308990)
- fix some static device nodes perms to match rule perms 0600 -> 0660
- add /etc/modprobe.d/pnp-aliases for floppy autoload

++++ amarok:
- fix collection scanner zombie (#309055)
- rename yauap to gstreamer/yauap (#308123)

++++ bootsplash-theme-SuSE:
- fix splash triggers (#304735)

++++ hwinfo:
- updated pci & usb ids

++++ kpowersave:
- released KPowersave 0.7.3:

++++ openSUSE-release:
- it's no longer beta

++++ release-notes:
* Update translations.
* Proofread English texts; thanks to Jana Jaeger.
* Support the "quote" tag.

++++ suspend:
- updated the s2ram whitelist:
- suspend-s2ram-LenovoX60Tablet.diff (b.n.c #265613)
- suspend-s2ram-DellXPSM1330.diff (b.n.c #325757)

++++ MozillaFirefox:
- Update the Novell Support search plugin in search-addons.tar.bz2 (#297261)

++++ kdebase4:
- update to 3.93.0.svn712052
++++ kde4-filesystem:
- own one path more

++++ kdegames4:
- patch KMahjongg, KMines, KReversi and KPat to start with a bigger initial window size (#298995)

++++ kdegames4-carddecks:
- patch KMahjongg, KMines, KReversi and KPat to start with a bigger initial window size (#298995)

++++ kdenetwork4:
- link krfb and krdc icons so that all 10.3 default apps have icons

++++ OpenOffice_org:
- updated to milestone oog680-m5 (OOo-2.3.rc3) [n#309238]
- updated ooo-build to 2.3.0.1.2:

++++ gimp:
- Added support for gutenprint, discarded the old libgimpprint module.

++++ gnome-session:
- Ensure ~/Desktop exists before copying to it (#310363)
- Fixed background resetting in /usr/bin/gnome (#309946).
- Fixed up kdm-support patch to support gnome sessions in KDM

++++ xorg-x11-driver-video:
- added "stable" 6.6.3 ATI driver; available as "radeonold"

++++ hal:
- added new patches:
  - hal-add-ThinkPadAcpiEvent_killswitch.diff: forward ACPI event for the killswitch (solve #302539 for ThinkPads to send a notification)

++++ hwinfo:
- updated X11 data (#307218)

++++ virtualbox:
- updated to version 1.5.0

++++ lots of kernel, yast2, and zypper work.

Some of the Package Version Highlights include:

- OpenOffice_org-2.3.0.1.2-4
- MozillaFirefox-2.0.0.6-20
- apache2-2.2.4-66
- cmake-2.4.7-13
- compiz-0.5.4-22
- cups-1.2.12-18
- gcc-4.2-22
- gimp-2.2.17-36
- glibc-2.6.1-15
- gnome-desktop-2.19.92-3
- gtk2-2.11.6-26
- hal-0.5.9.git20070831-8
- kdebase3-3.5.7-78
- kdebase4-3.93.0.svn712052-6
- kernel-default-2.6.22.5-23 (2.6.22.5-29 available)
- make-3.81-64
- mysql-5.0.45-19
- perl-5.8.8-74
- php5-5.2.4-7
- python-2.5.1-35
- qt3-3.3.8-72
- udev-114-17
- xorg-x11-7.2-132
- [Full RPM List](#)

As you can see, at this late point most of the packages have only jumped in internal openSUSE tiny versions.

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So, all in all, I think this release candidate is just about there. openSUSE 10.3 seems to be shaping up quite nicely and the only problem I had was with the disappearing update applet icon in KDE and the suspend to ram. I am looking forward to the final. It will be the best openSUSE yet.

An internal RC2 was integrated into the schedule to test the new GNOME, but there have been no announcements concerning any changes to the planned public release on October 4 as of yet.

When available I will test the upgrade functionality first, then perhaps the >15 partition option, and a nice clean install. I think I will also start with a fresh download as opposed to a delta. Until then, happy testing.

I have more [screenshots](#) in the gallery and my previous coverage can be found [here](#).