

All Hail! King of the Minis: DSL

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Everybody's favorite itty bitty distro released a RC1 of version 2.0 as announced on [Distrowatch](#) [4] and [damnsmalllinux.org](#) [5]. Everytime I boot damn small linux I marvel at the accomplishments found in that remarkable system. It never fails to floor me how so many useful applications can be cram-packed into less than 50mbs. Another characteristic of this distro, or more accurately its developers, is the release fast and release often philosophy. Those guys never let any grass grow under their feet. Seems like they just released 1.5 and yet 2.0 is imminent. Although most new features and improvements took place under the hood, there are some improvements on the surface. As usual, there's a new theme to go with the release and as such, not only is Damn Small Linux still the portable workhorse we all know and love, but also sports a nice fresh look.

As stated most of the improvements took place under the hood making for a better developmental environment and much improved hardware detection and setup. Some improvements and new features of the new 2.0 version include:

- new kernel 2.4.31 and modules
- new autodetected LT winmodems
- new floppy tool GUI
- updated Firefox and with mime types for mailto,irc, audio, video, pdf, .doc, added bookmarks
- new toram and /optional dir w/ prompts if needed
- new 64 cloops & rewrote cloop management up to 64 cloops
- updated wallpaper lua
- added hack for extending ramdisk to use swap
- updated DSLpanel added System Stats, Date Time, and others

- added hack for extending ramdisk to use swap
- [Full changelog](#) [5]

The first thing I noticed upon boot of my crispy new damn small linux cd was the added "toram" boot option. This is the one of the few times I've actually been able to use that feature, what with this distro being so damn small. It was wonderful. Applications opened instantaneously and things almost happened before I even clicked. 🍷 Damn small's performance has always been one of its major draws and now with toram, it might break some speed records and rival Austrumi for the King of Speed in tuxmachinesland.

But not all improvements were under the hood. This time around they have employed a blue theme featuring a gorgeous abstract wallpaper of beautiful hues of blue and amber. The windec is a lovely shade of blue as are the panel and menu highlights. It's always one of the things I look forward to when booting a new dsl release for the first time - what will the desktop look like now? It's a wondrous thing that developers primarily concerned with development and functionality actually take the time to show their artistic side to make their distro not only functional but absolutely beautiful. They know the value of eyecandy and never fail to deliver. It makes for a more complete and enjoyable user experience.



[6]

Their exclusive DSLpanel has new options added since my last in-depth look. They integrated their great little time/date tool, and a wonderful new system stats tool. The system stats tool has tabs to show all kinds of system information such as cpu specifications, ram usage, ifconfig information, modules loaded, mounts, and even dmesg. This is a great time saving tool. I realize that may be a bold statement from a cli junkie, but this is one time a gui tool can actually save time. Clicking those tabs are much faster than typing in those commands. Some other options since version 1.x might include Select mirror, floppy tool, and pcmcia tool.

The harddrive install remains the easiest and quickest tool for this type of thing. One clicks on the menu entry and a terminal opens for user input. Just type in the partition of choice and answer 2 or 3 basic questions and that's it. The only drawback for the newbie is they must first prepare an install partition if they don't already have a spare. Fdisk is included in the tool stack for this job if needed.



[7]



[8]



[9]

Akin to the harddrive installer and very similar in appearance is the handy dandy boot floppy tool. It downloads the image from a dsl mirror, formats a floppy and installs the image. Very similar but perhaps even more handy is their floppy tool for usb. This tool makes a boot floppy for an usb key. In case you didn't know, DSL is small enough to be installed onto a usb key. This usb boot floppy tool is wonderful for those of us stuck in the iceage whose motherboards can't boot straight from an usb key.



[10]



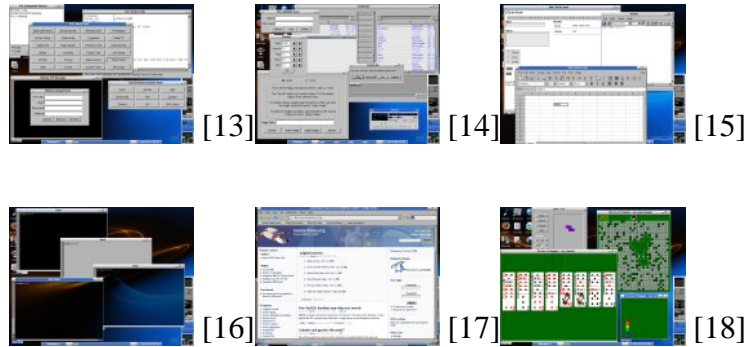
[11]



[12]

While there appeared to be quite a bit of under-the-hood work and some obvious to the nekked eye, it's still damn small

linux in principal. It's the same teeny tiny distro that includes at least one application for almost any need, sometimes more. For example, they include 3 browsers, yet only one email client, several editors, yet only one spreadsheet. They even include an itty bitty database and gui front-end. It's a wonderful mix of thoughtful and insightful choices verses size considerations. The developers have amazing instincts.



Damn Small was the first and is the best. They are the undisputed King of the Mini distros. I first used damn small when their gui consisted of little more than a couple xterms and a little bitty clock up in the corner. At that time it saved an extra 500mb former-swap space from being wasted. It has come a long way since then to be a full featured and potential everyday desktop. With its package downloader, expanding and customizing your damn small linux is almost as easy as running any full 2 or 3 700mb iso download. The hunting and downloading is the biggest chore of using tarballs afterall. Everytime I boot Damn Small Linux I'm overwhelmed by the "wow" factor. It's a great system that just gets better and better while never leaving its roots. I hope they never go by way of Peanut or the rumors of Austrumi. I hope we never lose the "wow" as we amaze at all the functionality and beauty of a 50mb download. I hope every reader of this article will [download DSL](#) [19] and give a try. All Hail the King!

Earlier coverage which might cover other features not included here can be found here: [DSL 1.3](#) [20] and [DSL 1.1](#) [21]. More [Scenshots](#) [22] in the gallery.

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- [3] <http://www.tuxmachines.org/taxonomy/term/102>
- [4] <http://distrowatch.com/2964>
- [5] <http://damnsmalllinux.org/cgi-bin/forums/ikonboard.cgi?;act=ST;f=36;t=9123>
- [6] <http://www.tuxmachines.org/gallery/dsl20r1/desktop>
- [7] <http://www.tuxmachines.org/gallery/dsl20r1/hdinstall>
- [8] <http://www.tuxmachines.org/gallery/dsl20r1/hdinstall3>
- [9] <http://www.tuxmachines.org/gallery/dsl20r1/hdinstall5>
- [10] <http://www.tuxmachines.org/gallery/dsl20r1/bootfloppy>
- [11] <http://www.tuxmachines.org/gallery/dsl20r1/bootfloppy1>
- [12] <http://www.tuxmachines.org/gallery/dsl20r1/bootfloppy2>
- [13] <http://www.tuxmachines.org/gallery/dsl20r1/stuff>
- [14] <http://www.tuxmachines.org/gallery/dsl20r1/stuff1>
- [15] <http://www.tuxmachines.org/gallery/dsl20r1/stuff2>
- [16] <http://www.tuxmachines.org/gallery/dsl20r1/xshells>
- [17] <http://www.tuxmachines.org/gallery/dsl20r1/firefox1>
- [18] <http://www.tuxmachines.org/gallery/dsl20r1/games>

[19] http://distro.ibiblio.org/pub/linux/distributions/damnsmall/release_candidate/dsl-2.0RC1.iso

[20] <http://www.tuxmachines.org/node/1774>

[21] <http://www.tuxmachines.org/node/878>

[22] <http://www.tuxmachines.org/gallery/dsl20r1>