

SAM Linux - Great little OS

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☒ While writing my column I was testing SAM Linux to feature as one of the Linux distributions released last month. And in playing around with it, I realized what an untapped treasure it is. Light apps, tasteful eyecandy, handy tools, multimedia and hardware support add up to make this one of the best out-of-the-box desktops available.

SAM is based on PCLOS and as such retains some of the telltale signs - some application splash screens, the PCLOS/Mandriva hard drive installer, Synaptic, and PCLOS' version of the Mandriva Control Center. These are great and probably indispensable, but it's the uniquely SAM characteristics that really seemed to shine.

The DESKTOP

The Xfce4 desktop is really maturing. In fact, being utilized in SAM like it is could convince one that it might be ready to replace KDE 3 on your desktop. But SAM has really dressed it up. The Wbar launcher at the top lends a feel of elegance without overcomplication. The two child panels at either corner give the desktop a touch of unique functionality (one's a screenshot button and the other a few desktop configurations). The Desklets offer added functionality with a shot of cool. My favorite is the Weather applet. Overall, it just feels complete and polished. It looks as though the developers really put a lot of thought and effort in designing their desktop.

APPLICATIONS

SAM ships as a one CD image, but that doesn't mean it's shy on apps. While it doesn't come with OpenOffice.org, it does have Abiword. Abiword recently put out a new version and it got several nice reviews. Since I need OOo for one of my jobs, I would have to install it either from repositories or from the OpenOffice.org site.

The other categories might need a bit of padding too depending upon your requirements and likes, but maybe not. For multimedia there's GNOME Mplayer, Kino (creation/editing), recordmydesktop, XMMS, and a mobile format converter. For Internet services there's Firefox 3.5.1, Opera, Pidgin, and p2p and downloaders. For graphics there's The GIMP, gThumb, and gtkam. And like it's cousin, it comes with codecs and plugins for full multimedia enjoyment locally and on the Web.



TOOLS

SAM comes with lots and lots of tools and utilities. In the Toolbox folder on the desktop is things like USB and Hard

drive installers, Mandriva's graphics configuration, and a nice Introduction/Help file.

Brasero, FlyBack (a system backup and restore tool), BleechBit (file cleaner), and GConf Cleaner (GConf database cleaner) are also found. Don't forget the PCLinuxOS version of Mandriva's Control Center. That really only has one rival in the Linux world and that's OpenSUSE's YAST Control Center. You can configure about anything in that. Also included is the Mandriva Network Manager. SAM inherits the great wireless support added by PCLOS making it convenient to connect to your wireless router. And, of course, who can forget Synaptic? It comes pre-configured with PCLOS repositories and thus has access to all the great applications from that project.

Conclusion

Rarely does a distribution greatly impress me these days. I've tested and written about so many that I've begun to become lethargic. Rarely do I get excited anymore. That's why I was taken with SAM. It brought back some of that old wide-eyed enthusiastic fascination I used to experience.

Too bad it might be short-lived. I hear rumors this is the last release to be based on PCLOS. I'm keeping an open mind, but I fear the worst.

[More Screenshots](#) [2]

[SAM Website](#) [3]

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