

Solving Rubix Linux 1.0 RC2

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Rubix is a Linux distribution forked from Slackware Linux. It differs from its parent in that Rubix uses Arch Linux's 'pacman' for simplified package management with dependency resolution. They released rc2 for their upcoming version 1.0 and we took it for a little spin.

The announcement states that highlights of this release include:

- * Kernel 2.6.15.1 with reiser4 support (including the installer)
- * Kernel 2.4.32, vanilla and patched for grsecurity
- * GCC 3.4.4 patched with Stack Smashing Protection
- * Heimdal Kerberos Support
- * SKey Password Support
- * KDE 3.5.0
- * Firefox and Thunderbird 1.5
- * Xorg 6.9.0
- * Udev has completely replaced hotplug for 2.6 kernels
- * Cleaned up and made the boot process much faster
- * Encrypted partition support through loop-aes
- * Online Package Browser
- * New Custom Live CD that is nearly the exact same environment every Rubix user will boot into after hard disk installation

Installation

It was stated that rubix installs from a livedcd environment, but it was virtually indistinguishable from other slack-based installs. It boots up to a bash prompt and requires root login. As with most slack installers, one then types 'setup.' From

there it walks it thru the install configuration in the same manner as other slack installers. One difference is that it asks where to install from, the livecd or an internet repository. Then a message appears stating that no package selection will be offered because rubix installs a bare minimum system and one should use pacman to install the rest after boot. As you might guess that first step takes a very short time. The opportunity to install grub and setup the root password happen next. Finally one is given the option of editing their rc.conf file. This is where one might setup their hostname, timezone, system clock, other modules, etc. I actually like this method because it's much faster than waiting for a new gui screen to come up for each option.

Upon first boot, one logs in as root and continues the install manually. I say manually, but one actually uses pacman to install X and kde and such. Being a binary distribution, this doesn't take too much time either, with the biggest expenditure being the downloading. At this point, one might use xorgconfig to setup their X server. I suggest setting up a regular user account as well.

System

Now one should be ready to log into their KDE 3.5.0 desktop. It's a default kde, but it's very stable and fast. It sits on Xorg 6.9.0 and uses gcc 3.4.4 on top of Kernel 2.6.15.1. Firefox 1.5 and OpenOffice 2.0.1 is also available from the online repository thru pacman. Gimp 2.2.10 must have been a dependency for KDE because it did not require my installing it. KDE required many many dependencies I wouldn't have thought necessary such as mysql. But at least all that good stuff gets installed with little effort from the end user. Mplayer is also available in the repository and functions very nicely other than complaining about /dev/dsp. It played any file type I threw at it. Regardless of that little error box, sound works fine not only in mplayer, but throughout. One can also install the kernel sources if need be.

A couple of packages I looked for that wasn't available are xawtv and rar/unrar. In fact, the only tv application available was mythtv. That's a bit overkill for my purposes. My only hardware problem was its failing to detect my usb scanner.

Another yummy morsel is their new online package browser. It's located on their site at <http://www.rubixlinux.org/packages>. This offers a much quicker way of finding if your desired package is available. If so, then one can simply "pacman" it on. So far, pacman has worked flawlessly for me and the packages work wonderfully. Even menu entries are made.

Conclusions

Rubix is a nice little system for the slack fan or anyone who doesn't mind a little fiddling under the bonnet. There are no gui configuration tools, but just as slack, it is simplicity at its finest. Just a few configuration files to edit to achieve the same end as heavy time consuming graphical tools offer. This is one of the reasons slack and slack based distros stay in the list of Tuxmachines' favorite distribution(s). With the addition of pacman and an expanding repository, it is a very nice, stable, and fast system. It's not fancy or what I'd refer to as "newbie-friendly," but it's a nice little system for someone with a little linux experience. It did what it advertised and it did it very well.

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