

Mandriva 2007.0 alpha livecd - KDE version test

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[4]Mandriva has begun their development cycle by releasing an alpha for the upcoming 2007.0. They posted a list of known issues and a few others are coming to light. Beranger looked at the gnome version which compliments my choice of the kde version. These are approximately 684M livecds and best defined as cooker snapshots at this point. The full install version is expected in the next few days.

The known issues as posted on the Mandriva wiki are:

- In live mode the keyboard may no be correctly initialised to your language, type `setxkbmap [your locale]` to fix it.
- When you reboot or halt, the CD may not be correctly ejected.
- You may need to launch `update-menus` to have the menu items complete (we are in the middle of the migration to full XDG menus)
- Once installed, inserting any kind of media such as CDs or USB keys makes the following message pop-up: "Cannot mount volume"
- The menu invest-chart is not working on the GNOME x86_64 version
- python-gtk2 applications might fail to start at all

[Beranger states](#) [5] that in the gnome version, his first impressions are marred by crippled menus and fuzzy icons. As the menu issue is already known, a workaround has been suggested. This isn't the first time, or even the second, that mandriva has released with broken menus. This time it is due to the migration to a xdg menus. I've seen other distros going through growing pains at this conversion. Fuzzy icons are usually due to using the wrong resolution/size of icons. Mandriva will probably get around to fixing that in the last release candidate if their track record stays true to form. Other issues concerned pcmcia and the gnome sound mixer.

So how did the kde version do here on a desktop machine?

Not too bad. After boot one is greeted by several configuration screens for language, timezone and keyboard. Mine went well and didn't need manual adjustment. Next the desktop starts up - rather slowly. I was almost starting to worry we had locked up. But the desktop appears and we are greeted by the mandriva welcome file. The wallpaper, colors, windec, etc were all the same as previously encountered. The menus seemed populated as well as could be expected. I ran the update-menus as suggested, but no other applications showed up. In the livecd format, applications are just lacking.



The known issues list was correct when it warned of the mounting removable media error. It appears to be a missing /etc/fstab entry, and the media can be manually mounted and used. Except that the only office suite offered is Koffice and it couldn't read a ppt made in OpenOffice (and edited some in mac's ms powerpoint). Not that that's mandriva's fault, I guess they needed to include some office suite.



As stated, applications seem a bit thin even for a livecd. But they do include a livecd copy, clamav, their mandriva control center, and a hard drive installer. The livecd copy didn't work real well here. It didn't apprise me of the progress then the screen just disappeared as opposed to informing me that it finished. The resulting livecd wouldn't boot stating it couldn't find or mount the squashfs.



Some of the other included apps are rosegarden, xmms, kdetv, xsane, xcam, kexi, k3b, kbear, gdb, nvu, gimp 2.3.9, firefox 1.5.0.4, xorg 7.1.0, a 2.6.16 kernel, and medigi sitting in KDE 3.5.3. There were a few little glitches here and there, but it's hard to determine with whom to assign blame. For example, gimp didn't have a window minimize option. Since this was my first run thru with gimp 2.3.9 (that I recall off hand), it could very well be a gimp thing. With rosegarden, I got a 'system timer resolution too low' error. embedjs crashed while trying to start. Konqueror wouldn't start from the menu item.



All in all, this livecd was a bit unimpressive, but it wasn't as bad as we've heard. It's a mandrive cooker snapshot, an early alpha. What did we expect? I'd like to see all developers offer a new theme each new development cycle, even if it's not complete or the one they end up using. I mean I boot this 2007.0 alpha, and it was for all tense and purposes

basically the same as the mandriva one we tested back in February perhaps with newer software versions. I don't see any innovation. I think that's gonna be the downfall of this lived.

Mandriva just isn't showing us anything new or exciting. I think perhaps they are wasting time and resources trying to enter into the lived market. Perhaps they should concentrate on their one-time strong suit of a bleeding edge nice looking install suite. Their lived loads up 5 full-screen consoles full of modules and yet it's hardware detection isn't up to knoppix's. Their choices of applications are so limited, due to... why? What's taking up all the space? In comparison, why can pclinixos or mepis come in the same size download and yet offer just about anything anyone could need?

Performance of this lived is a bit lacking as well. There were marked delays in all operations. This condition worsened considerably under the vesa drivers (desired here as 'nv' blanks my main monitor in many setups as it did today with mdv and I have to cock my head left to use my secondary). Just moving a window was almost agony. Apps were slow to open and to perform any of their operations.

I wish this article didn't sound as negative as I fear it might, but perhaps mandriva should skip the lived production. Whatever their choice, as this is an early alpha, I won't let this experience linger as a lasting impression. I hope you don't either. Overall the kde version did function better than the previously mentioned gnome version. In any case, we'll be testing releases all thru this development cycle and keep you posted.

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