# Mandriva 2007 Beta 3 Report

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[4]It was no secret that Mandriva released Beta 3 to their upcoming 2007 yesterday. I saw the news carried on just about every Linux site out there. I'm not sure why all the excitement and attention this time, I must have missed something. I mean, I'm always quite excited, but that kind of press is usually reserved for major releases or developmental milestones. Perhaps beta 3 is a milestone. There are some nice new features this time and perhaps this is why it was so noteworthy. It took me over 24 hours, but I finally got the 586/x64_86 dvd downloaded and burnt. This is what we found.

Some of the changes appeared soon after boot. The installer has a revamped look this beta. The initial boot screen is the same as encountered before with some adapted openSUSE components. However the installer has some new looks. The background is a new graphic with the color of a lovely Royal blue. In the upper left hand corner we find a modified Mandriva logo featuring the Mandriva Penguin head, their familiar star, and Mandriva name in white. In the other upper corner we find "Beta 2007" in some cool futuristic font. The wizard window is a bit updated with a new color highlight of light blue and 3D scroll bar. The basic steps are the same to which we are accustomed.

[5] [6] [7]

*I'm not sure how many of you remember, but back before the turn of the century Mandrake (as it was then known) had the ultimate Linux installer. It ran circles around all others. It was beautiful, logical, and easy to use. It was Mandrake and their ground-breaking installer that did more for the proliferation of Linux at that time than anything else. I feel confident saying that. I believe it with all my heart. Mandrake was **the***
*newbie's distro. It made installing Linux as easy or easier than found with Windows. One of the major problems for any newbie I think is the partitioning step. Mandrake took that step and found a way not only for a newbie to visualize what might be happening, but to visually resize and make new partitions. Fdisk and cryptic commands were not needed. Long before I knew how to use fdisk, I often used Mandrake's Diskdrake for my partitioning needs. I recall*

*installer was just as easy. Understanding mbrs and how to install bootloaders wasn't necessary. Again, Mandrake took the worry out of users' hands. But I digress I guess. They may have released some clunkers from time to time, they may have started treating their users like gnats, and they may have kicked Gael to the curb, but I'll always have a soft spot for them. Mandrake opened the world of Linux to me and this is why I still follow their development fairly close.*

At the login screen I noticed something a bit different. There was an entry in the menu called **drake3d**. This must be the 3D desktop about which I've heard [8]. Of course that was my first choice. Upon login I got the ai/glx configuration screen, but most options were grayed out and I was informed my desktop didn't support 3d effects. I double-checked and xorg was indeed using nv. I though perhaps I could try and configure it per this howto [9] posted by a developer a week or so back. Still no joy was found. Next, I downloaded the nvidia proprietary drivers and tried again. This time xgl was available and I was told to restart X. After X restarted, again I was back at the grayed-out configuration screen with the message my desktop doesn't support 3D effects. Well, I was disappointed. :cry: I knew I had enjoyed these effects in Kororaa, openSUSE, and Dreamlinux.

However, I mentioned my luck to a friend and he said it worked for him. He was using an ATI 9250 graphics card with the 586 KDE live cd version. He tried the livecd in another machine that had an nvidia graphics chip and he suffered the same fate as me. I surmise there are still issues with Mandriva's implementation and nvidia chips. But ATI folks are in luck. When activated you will see an entry in the Mandriva Control Center called Configure 3D Desktop Effects. That opens a module identical to the configuration that opens when attempting to login to the 3D desktop giving one the choices of using AIGLX or Xgl. Clicking upon Run compiz configuration tool brings up this more complex options configuration screen.

 [10]  [11]  [12]

As you can see from the following screenshots, contributed by Texstar, the effects appear to be working fine. We see in the first screenshot how scaling is working. The windows appear to size themselves equally to fit in the screen. In the second screenshot we can see some of the "wobbling" effects, and in the third shot we see the most popular effect of "the cube." Texstar said of the system performance under AIGLX, "It was acceptable. Sometimes enlarging a window would cause a little pause before it would adjust. Menu opening was quick. Wiggling the windows was good. The cube worked fine but I could tell my video card was straining a bit." Very good work from Mandriva.

 [13]  [14]  [15]

As we heard [16], Mandriva has updated their Package Manager as well. The new RpmDrake v3 now combines installing, updating, and removing of packages from within one module. Users have been asking for this for years and now it is so. One initial glitch is that trying to start it as user from the menu shoots an error about there not being sufficient priveledges, rather than asking for root password. However, I started it at the console and was able to test the basic functionality. Indeed, it does install packages and places an entry into the menu as we can see here with installing Rock 'n Diamonds. Much like synaptic, one clicks on the software package they wish it install and a little plus sign appears on the package name to let you know it's selected. Once you press Apply, the package and its dependencies are install.

 [17]  [18]  [19]

Uninstalling a package works very similarly. Click on the item to be uninstalled, click apply, and it will uninstall the package and any of its exclusive dependencies. The menu entry for it will also be removed. The basic functionality is in place, but it still a bit buggy. During one "reload package list" I suffered a complete crash and burn of the program, but the next time it did not. Also, repainting of categories list was buggy. I had to mouse over sometimes to get the list back if another window had been opened over the package manager window. Weird huh? But all in all it was very impressive for a first run of this application.

 [20]  [21]  [22]

Also new since my last test of Mandriva, which was beta 1, is this great looking Gnome 2.15.92 theme. It features a light blue windec with a round 3D almost gel-like appearance. It's called la Ora Free and features nice 3D like widgets throughout. The lower panel was extremely nice looking as well. This new look hasn't made its way into KDE yet, but Gnome was looking very slick indeed. Another :up: for Mandriva.

 [23]  [24]  [25]

KDE did get a new splash screen that looked rather fantastic. However, upon my first logins, the fonts in Mandriva were quite fugly again as found in beta 1. I was using nv and then later nvidia to no difference. I copied some ttf from my gentoo partition and ran mkfontdir, mkfontscale, and fc-cache and it looked much better. In fact, they looked some better after restarting X before I changed the fonts to one of my imported ttf. I bet it needed to run fc-cache. Texstar stated of his font experience, "I switched to the 1024 res as it looks best on my flat panel. It was kinda mixed. Some fonts looked really good like in the menu but others like in the kde control panel were like they weren't AA or something." Firefox fonts were the worst for both of us and never did improve here.

 [26]  [27]  [28]

Another glitch encountered was with hal and kde automount. Upon insertion of a cd or dvd, the KDE media daemon opens its window, but does not mount the media. It states it needs Hal. I knew I had left the haldaemon enabled during the services configuration step of the installation, but upon double-checking, it was not running. On boot was check, it just isn't getting started. Once you start the haldaemon, the automount works as it should. Gnome's removeable media automount worked fine.

 [29]  [30]  [25]

Icewm had some kind of widget rendering problem, but wmaker seemed to work fine. I also didn't find a new changelog. It appears it hasn't been updated since 2006 was released. On a good note, commonly used video formats worked really well in totem and xine.

 [31]  [32]  [33]

Some version numbers this release are:

- kdebase-3.5.4-12
- gnome-desktop-2.15.92-1
- kernel-2.6.17.2mdv-1-1
- x11-server-xorg-1.1.1-8
- gcc-4.1.1-3
- openoffice.org-2.0.3-2
- mozilla-firefox-1.5.0.6-4
- gaim-2.0.0-2.beta3.1.1
- gimp-2.3.10-5
- Full rpmlist as installed [34].

Overall, I think Mandriva 2007 is beginning to turn the corner. Functionality is improving slowly but surely and looks are improving quickly and dramatically. Hardware detection was really good, including my newish printer model. Overall system performance was good here, although I didn't test vesa drivers (which was what was giving us problems last test). There were some new features and some new eye candy to get excited about. There were a few problems here and there, but we're still in beta and things are looking up. Perhaps 2007 will be a banner release for Mandriva afterall.

**UPDATE:** I found the changelog [35].

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[22] http://www.tuxmachines.org/gallery/mdv2007b3/pkgmgr12

[23] http://www.tuxmachines.org/gallery/mdv2007b3/gabout

[24] http://www.tuxmachines.org/gallery/mdv2007b3/gpref

[25] http://www.tuxmachines.org/gallery/mdv2007b3/gautom

[26] http://www.tuxmachines.org/gallery/mdv2007b3/splash

[27] http://www.tuxmachines.org/gallery/mdv2007b3/fonts

[28] http://www.tuxmachines.org/gallery/mdv2007b3/fonts2

[29] http://www.tuxmachines.org/gallery/mdv2007b3/autom1

[30] http://www.tuxmachines.org/gallery/mdv2007b3/autom4

[31] http://www.tuxmachines.org/gallery/mdv2007b3/icewm

[32] http://www.tuxmachines.org/gallery/mdv2007b3/wmaker

[33] http://www.tuxmachines.org/gallery/mdv2007b3/avis

[34] http://www.tuxmachines.org/node/9343

[35] http://www.tuxmachines.org/node/9359