

SLED 10 rocks!

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SLED 10 rocks!

I've quite recently bought a new laptop (Znote 6214W 1,83 Ghz Intel dual core, 512 Mb 533 Mhz DDR2 RAM, 60 Gb harddisk, 512 Mb nVidia video card) with XPSP2 preinstalled. It's been a while since I last bought a new computer, and I must admit I had completely forgotten how cheap the default XP Home installation is on applications. No office apps (except Word Pad), no CD/DVD burning tools, very few media codecs, no decent image manipulation tools, hell, not even a pdf-reader. Still, as I like to play games, I wanted to keep XP around for Football Manager 2006 and Elders Scrolls IV: Oblivion.

A dual-boot solution seemed to be the best choice, XP for games and Linux for everything else. Having used Canonical's brilliant shipit program, I had some Dapper-disks laying around, and decided to go for an Ubuntu/XP-dual boot. Unfortunately the Live-CD didn't boot properly. Seemed to be a videocard-problem, as the the screen crashed into random colourfull patterns as the splash screen was about to appear. I tried a couple of other distros, and of those I had lying around, only the Linspire 5.0 LiveCD worked. As this one can't be installed, and I in any case prefer Gnome, I sort of gave up on linux for a while (actually I still messed around a bit on an old Toshiba laptop (Pentium III, 32 Mb RAM, 4 Gb harddisk), but more on that another time).

This was until SLED 10. By now I had used a lot of time getting my XP driven PC up to date, and it now had OO 2.0, Gimp, DivX codecs and so on. Still, as SUSE is the only major distro I have never tried, I decided to give it a go when it came with the Linux Format DVD.

I am still very much a Linux newbie, so I appreciated the easy-to-understand graphical partitioning and setup tool SLED provided. Despite being a bit slow, the install was relatively seamless. My soundcard wasn't automatically configured for some reason, but this was easily taken care of when I booted the system for the first time (without command line jiggery).

And just to get that out of the way; SLED 10 is an amazing OS. I can't remeber ever having had so many «how can this be free software ?!»-experiences. Everything is easy, everything is beautiful. The selection of preinstalled apps is incredible, the configuration tools is extremely user-friendly. It's easily the most intuitive, best equipped and most polished distro I've ever seen. It just feels utterly professional. Go Novell! SLED also seem to perform very well, though it's difficult to really compare it to other distros or operative systems, because even XP runs really fast on my rather new system

On the downside is the lack of proprietary drivers and media plugins. I understand that this is a strategic choice from

Novell in order to promote free software, but for me as an end user its just plain annoying. Especially since I don't have internet. This means I have to bring a usb-stick to the university and download the packages to it, then go home only to discover that I lack dependencies, and then try again the next day. Thanks to the run-script from NVIDIA's homepage I was able to get 3D and Xgl working for my graphics card after quite easily, but I still can't get totem to play mpeg's avi's or DVD's. MP3 works out of the box, though.

All in all 9 out of 10 for SUSE Linux Enterprise Desktop, and easily the best distro I have used.
My SLED 10 desktop with banshee playing MP3.

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