Another Sabayon Linux 3.2 Look (from a non-Gentoo user)

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My background over the years has largely been with Mandrake/Mandriva Linux, and it's fully grown and mature (no longer a child), PCLinuxOS. Yes, I've dabbled with several other distributions along the way, but I always return to these two (Mandriva on the server, PCLinuxOS on the desktop).

I don't know a whole lot about Sabayon/Gentoo's command line package manager Portage, and the relatively recent GUI front end to it called Kuroo. So, if I do continue with this distribution (and I think I will), I'm going to have to do some learning after all.

Although there will be some overlap, I will try to not repeat the material in Rob Williams excellent review (which is linked to from tuxmachines main page).

Although you can run Sabayon Linux as a Live CD, I went directly to installing Sabayon Linux X86_64 on my main test machine. Sabayon Linux uses a modified version of the Red Hat Anaconda installer, and you get a choice of Text or GUI Installation. I chose the GUI install, and away I went. If you have an NVidia Graphic video card, X starts up with the latest NVidia binary drivers. (Yes, I know, many folks will not like that Sabayon Linux contains NVidia's closed drivers). You have your choice of desktop during install: KDE, Gnome, XFCE, Enlightenment 16, and Fluxbox Geeky. I chose KDE. The installation process was completely trouble free.

After installation, the first boot of Sabayon Linux was impressive--everything worked. I have no unusual devices on my test box--but I do have an older 15-inch LCD Monitor that is very fussy about sync rates. I usually have to start up in console mode and edit the xorg.conf file to get X-windows to start. Not this time. I plugged in (at separate times) a PS2 connected keyboard, and a USB keyboard on this box--both work great. Sound works. Networking works. USB flash drives work. This is dead simple stuff.

Sabayon Linux graphics are orange, yellow, and black--and are not to my taste. So I proceed to "blueify" my machine. I read up a bit on the emerge command, and install my favorite KDE windows decoration style (ThinKeramik), and my favorite widget style.

The Sabayon Linux start button in the KDE Panel brings up the SUSE menu structure. Not my cup of tea at all, but if you right click on it, you get a popup menu choice that includes "Switch to KDE Menu Style". I do so, and I get the the K-icon and a standard KDE menu system. I install some of my favorite wallpapers into /usr/kde/share/wallpapers, and adjust my desktop accordingly.

I have rarely found Linux distros that have fonts that look as good as those on Mandriva/PCLinuxOS, and Sabayon's fonts don't. I fuss with different fonts and antialiasing, and finally arrive at fonts that are adequate.

So with basic eye-candy stuff settled, time to try the fancy AIGLX or XGL desktop acceleration effects. In the KDE menu system, under the "Settings" menu choice, there are three programs that affect this:

- Acceleration Manager - This is where you select your Desktop Acceleration Mode
    - No Desktop Acceleration
    - AIGLX Desktop Acceleration

      or
    - XGL Desktop Acceleration

    The Acceleration Manager explains the two modes of acceleration as follows:

    - **AIGLX**
      Where supported, has better performance than XGL and uses less memory. It is the best choice for performance and stability.
    - **XGL**
      XGL is more compatible with ATI Graphics Cards than AIGLX, but it is slower, does not support Dual Monitor nor OpenGL games on top of itself.
- Beryl Settings Manager - This is where you tie the various acceleration effects to keyboard and mouse control. The degree of customization and number of effects is breathtaking.
- Emerald Theme Manager - And here, you can select a theme for your window decorations that are applied in accelerated mode.

So, what's my take on this? It's getting very close to the time when you can live in AIGLX all the time. Under AIGLX, I note a very slight degradation in the fonts (almost not noticable unless you are looking for it), and GLX based games run a little slower. I like the rotating cube as a desktop organizer, and it is somewhat integrated into the 1-4 KDE 1-4 desktop choices in the panel. With the three programs, Sabayon makes it easy to switch on and off, and easy to configure and customize.

Sabayon Linux specific documentation on their web site is sparse and incomplete. To continue much furthur with this distro, I'll have to go to the Gentoo web site. However, KDE's "Konversation" IRC chat program appears on the desktop by default (named "Get Live Help") for some real time assistance.

Despite the sparse documentation and the not so great fonts, I'm very impressed with Sabayon Linux 3.2. Its performance and flexibility are excellent, and the DVD comes with a wide range of software. I encourage everyone to give it a try--even if you have never have tried Gentoo.

[Linux](#)