

Review: Enso OS 0.4

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Enso OS is a Linux distribution based on Xubuntu. Enso features the Xfce desktop with the Gala window manager which is imported from elementary OS. Enso OS 0.4 is the project's latest release and the new version runs on 64-bit (x86_64) computers exclusively.

The 0.4 release offers a few new features. There is a new note taking application included by default called Pinny. The AppHive (sometimes written "Apphive") software manager has been updated and allows users to mark (star) favourite applications. Reportedly, AppHive's performance has been improved while it is processing queued actions in the background. This release also includes a new dark theme, though the desktop uses a light theme by default. While there are not many new features in this version's release announcement, the distribution does seem to be placing a focus on minor improvements and tweaks to the user experience.

[...]

One thing I find interesting about the Enso project is it comes across as relatively humble. The distribution's website doesn't make bold claims about changing the computing landscape or leading the way in innovation. It doesn't claim to be especially easy to use or perfect for gaming. The project does mention a few things it does differently, such as its software centre and the hybrid desktop. This understated approach was one I found somewhat endearing. The project sets out to do a few things differently from its parent, but not with an apparent quest for glory.

The AppHive software centre, as I mentioned above, is a capable software manager. It mostly functions well and makes it easy to find new applications. I would have liked more status and progress information during the install process, but otherwise AppHive is a decent software centre.

To me the more interesting feature was the Xfce/Gala desktop. It offers most of the flexibility and performance of Xfce while serving up a more modern (or alternatively more macOS-style) desktop interface. Whether modern/macOS is a characteristic that appeals to the user will likely be entirely a personal choice. For me, the desktop did not introduce many features that really appealed to me. Though to be fair, it also didn't do anything that caused me serious problems. The application menu in a window concept never really clicked with me, but otherwise the hybrid interface worked well.

The top bar with its shortcuts to files in my home directory certainly appealed to me. On the other hand, having the top

panel also act as a unified menu bar for the active application felt awkward. In the end, it mostly balanced out.

On the whole Enso didn't wow me, but it also functioned well. It provided a decent experience and mostly stayed out of my way while I was working. I can see how this style of desktop experience would appeal to people, especially those who like macOS or elementary OS style desktop environments.

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