

Linux Mint "Bianca" KDE Edition Beta 020: A Small Review

By *eco2geek*

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[Linux Mint](#) [2] is an Ubuntu-based distro whose goal in life, per its website, "is to produce an elegant, up to date and comfortable GNU/Linux desktop distribution." The developers have released both GNOME-based and KDE-based versions in the past, and their latest version, v2.2 "Bianca," is already final in its GNOME incarnation. They just released a beta version of "Bianca KDE Edition" using KDE v3.5.6. The final version is to be released later this month.

Mint also comes with proprietary multimedia components such as libdvdcss2 and w32codecs preinstalled, so that it'll play DVDs and most video formats out of the box. It has the Flash plugin and Java preinstalled as well, for all your web-viewing needs. This version of Linux Mint uses kernel 2.6.17-10 (by contrast, Debian Etch will use 2.6.18).

The 803 MB DVD is live, like the other Ubuntu's, so there's no need to install it to test it out. Like many other live CDs, it uses unionfs to give the feel of a writeable filesystem, so that, given enough memory, you can install quite a few things on it.

☒ [3]

1. Default look 'n' feel

This is what it looks like when first started: Very green and very zen. At the bottom, there are two panels on top of one another; the bottom one has a news ticker going, monitoring the Mint forum's RSS feed (there are a bunch of other feeds to choose from in its configuration). The top one contains a KMenu replacement called the "Tasty Menu" which feels like a "lite" version of the Suse menu some of you may be familiar with.

☒ [4]

2. Tasty Menu in action

The distro also includes a new, simplified file manager application for KDE, named Dolphin. Word is that this will be the default file manager in KDE 4. (Konqueror is still available; you will have to run it from the command line or from the panel button, however.)

☒ [5]

3. Dolphin file manager

Now, if you'll excuse me for a moment, it's time to get back to blue, and something a bit more familiar. So stand by while I repaint the walls and switch around the furniture...

☒ [6]

4. Linux Mint reloaded

Ahhhh. Same distro, different look. Much better, IMHO. Nice that KDE is so configurable.

☒ [7]

5. Suse menu in action

You can, of course, switch to the new Suse menu if you like it better. In other words, you can choose from between 3 different menu styles.

Beyond the usual suspects -- digiKam; the GIMP; K3b; KOffice, and MPlayer -- Mint comes with a DVD ripper named "k9copy" and a CD ripper named "KAudioCreator."

☒ [8]

6. CD and DVD rippers

If you'll pardon a bit of editorializing, one thing Ubuntu does that causes pain to hardened Linux users is to (over-)simplify things. Since Mint uses the default Ubuntu repositories, it contains such Ubuntu "gems" as System Settings, which aims at replacing the KDE Control Center. Each of the icons in System Settings, when clicked, brings up a KDE Control Center module, so I'm not clear on why this needed to be done. Perhaps it's to bring KDE and GNOME closer together. In any case, here are both:

☒ [9]

7. "kcontrol" vs. "systemsettings"

The default package manager is named Adept. You can run it in two modes, one of which appears much simpler to use than the other. (Note the "Kubuntu Hardware Database Collection" applet in the background. Evidently the Kubuntu folks are trying to keep up on what hardware does and doesn't work. The applet collects information on your hardware and sends it to Kubuntu.)

☒ [10]

8. Adept

Finally, you can install and run Beryl from the Mint live CD, given enough memory. (If you have an nvidia card, as I do, the easiest way to get this working is just to run the proprietary nvidia installer and do some editing of xorg.conf by hand. They include a script named "envy" that will install and uninstall nvidia/ATI drivers, but it didn't work well for me. The DVD includes the kernel headers, so using the nvidia installer is relatively painless.)

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9. Beryl

Finally, one cute thing: every time you log on, "fortune" pops up a witty joke or phrase. (It has blonde jokes, fer cryin' out loud.)

I found Linux Mint to be an easy-to-use distribution with a growing [forum](#) [12] and [wiki](#) [13]. [Release notes are here](#) [14]. [Download links are here](#) [15].

[Reviews](#)

Source URL: <http://www.tuxmachines.org/node/15051>

Links:

- [1] <http://www.tuxmachines.org/taxonomy/term/57>
- [2] <http://www.linuxmint.com/index.html>
- [3] <http://img183.imageshack.us/my.php?image=01defaultdesktopc9.png>
- [4] <http://img183.imageshack.us/my.php?image=02tastymenumr1.png>
- [5] <http://img183.imageshack.us/my.php?image=03dolphinfilemanagercu1.png>
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- [12] <http://www.linuxmint.com/forum/>
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