

Review: Ubuntu Feisty Fawn

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Another six months, another release from the Ubuntu folks. The Ubuntu 7.04 release, better known as Ubuntu Feisty Fawn, is another cutting-edge, but not bleeding-edge, release that shows what Linux is capable of on the desktop. I've been running it since the early betas, and have found that it's the best Ubuntu release yet.

The first thing a new user will notice about Feisty is that the Ubuntu folks have made the download page very user-friendly, allowing users to select a few options to download the right CD rather than picking out the proper ISO name from a long list. I usually prefer to grab ISO images using GNU wget rather than Firefox's download manager (on the off chance that Firefox decides to crash) so I was a bit concerned the friendly interface would obscure the actual URL of the ISO -- but when you choose the options that are right for your computer, you're redirected to a page that includes the download URL and tips on burning ISOs.

With the Feisty release, you have the standard live CD installers for Ubuntu, Kubuntu, Xubuntu, and Edubuntu, plus alternate installers, plus the Ubuntu's server install. And, of course, you have the various hardware platforms as well -- x86, AMD64, UltraSPARC, and PowerPC. For the purpose of this review, I looked at the x86 version of Ubuntu and Kubuntu, on three machines -- an IBM Intellistation Z Pro dual 2.66GHz Xeon with 2.5GB of RAM with an Nvidia Quadro 4 video card, a homebrew AMD Athlon 64 X2 4200+ with 4GB of RAM and a newer Nvidia card (GeForce 7900), and an IBM ThinkPad T43 with 1GB of RAM.

The live CD installer hasn't changed much, if at all, since Edgy. Pop in the CD, and if you have a system with at least 256MB of RAM, the installer will take you into an Ubuntu or Kubuntu desktop. Users can get a feel for Ubuntu before installing, or just dive right in to the installation by clicking the Install icon. The install wizard walks you through basic installation questions like username, password, time zone, and disk partitioning, and then it's just a matter of waiting for all the files to be copied to disk.

I ran the installer on the homebrew machine and the IBM workstation. Both times, the installer ran fine, detected all of my hardware, and got everything up and running in about 30 to 40 minutes.

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