

Mandriva 2008 Beta 1, "Cassini" -- A few thoughts

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I can recall when a new impending release from Mandrake/Mandriva was great cause for excitement. In the last few years, Mandriva has been on the decline. Could the upcoming 2008 release start to turn things around?

The (U/Ku/X)buntus came out free of cost and ate large chunks of Mandriva's market share (Mandriva is a for-profit distribution?via membership in the "Mandriva Club"). PCLinuxOS, which is now the number 2 distro on the Distrowatch (default six-month) hit parade, was spawned from Mandriva 9.2 ate another chunk. In addition, many other smaller distros have come to enjoy popular success, particularly on the desktop (which was Mandriva's early niche) such as Mepis, Mint, and Sabayon. Out of kindness and brevity, I won't dwell on some of the mistakes that Mandriva has made to contribute to its own decline. Suffice to say that the increasing quality and quantity of competing distros combined with Mandriva's own mistakes have served to diminish Mandriva's market share.

Mandrake/Mandriva has always seemed a somewhat quirky company to me. For example, in this Beta 1 Release, "rpmrake", which is Mandriva's graphical package updater and installer, is missing from the installation media iso which makes it rather difficult to install and update packages without some special knowledge. There are two main reasons for releasing Beta's of a distribution?one is wider testing for bugs and issues to be fixed before the main release. The other reason (very important reason for a for-profit distro) is to try to generate some excitement and momentum for the impending final release. However, if you're not particularly knowledgeable about Mandriva's package management tools, you're going to be stuck after the install from your CD's/DVD without a graphical package software installer. If you decide to try this Beta, here's how to get "rpmrake" installed:

1) Get a terminal:

Press the Alt+F2 keys, and type *konsole* into the Run Command dialog.

2) In the konsole, become root:

su [enter]

Password: [type root password] [enter]

3) Type:

urpmi.addmedia main

<ftp://carroll.cac.psu.edu/pub/linux/distributions/mandrivalinux/devel/cooker/i586/media/main/release> with
media_info/synthesis.hdlist.cz [enter]

urpmi rpmrake [enter]

After this, you will have the graphical package installer. You can go to the wiki site, and follow Mandriva's

instructions for setting up the repositories.

During the install process, I received notices regarding missing programs. I thought I might have a bad DVD burn, but it turns out that due to some name mangling, the libwpg and libwps packages are missing (WordPerfect and Microsoft Works import filters) in the iso. I just selected "skip" on the menu and proceeded with the install. The rest of the install was flawless.

Despite these issues, let me make no mistake here?I think Mandriva 2008 will be a very fine distro, if Mandriva can avoid doing something really boneheaded to the final release. My beta 1 install is based on the 2.6.22 linux kernel (tmb) with the CFQ staircase scheduler, and is running smoothly. The desktop feel is very snappy, response time is great, and everything feels well-integrated. The Beta 2 release is due out August 17 (see <http://wiki.mandriva.com/en/Releases/Mandriva/2008.0/Development> for the release schedule).

Mandriva 2008 could possibly be a release that convinces me to shed a few dollars and become a Mandriva Club member again. Time will tell.

Disclaimer: I have no financial interests or investments with Mandriva.

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Source URL: <http://www.tuxmachines.org/node/18972>

Links:

[1] <http://www.tuxmachines.org/taxonomy/term/123>