

LG3D LiveCD 2.4 Test 1

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Created 20/04/2006 - 6:47am

Submitted by srlinuxx on Thursday 20th of April 2006 06:47:38 AM Filed under [Linux](#) [1] [Reviews](#) [2] [-s](#) [3]



[4]Sun has released a new version of it's Project Looking Glass platform, LG3D LiveCD 2.4 Test 1. I was a bit excited to test this new release as it's been 6 months since 2.3 was released. I tried to imagine what might be awaiting during download, burn and boot. LG3D was so unique at the time of it's last release, but it has some real competition now in other's offering, such as those featuring XGL. What did Sun do to set themselves apart from the rest?

I could almost just copy and paste my article on 2.3 from last October. I didn't see much new except perhaps the addition of two more file managers and some rearranging of the launchbar. Both of these new file managers are fairly unique and have 3d qualities with directory icons that appear to be expandable file folders and file icons that appear to be roll-up scrolls. One is in the form of a 'list' if you will, and clicking on a directory changes the list to that directory's files and folders. The other resembles a traditional file manager a little more than the previous. It presents its files and folders in transparent window with a few actions in a menubar above.



[5]



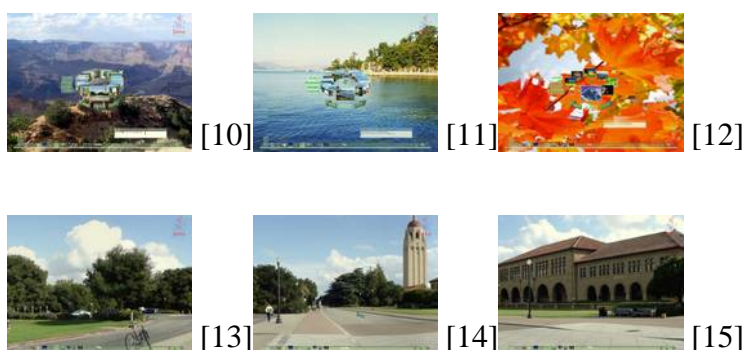
[6]

The quick launcher is bit different as well. This time we have a miniature expanded menu that zooms to a normal size when one hovers over it with their mouse. The more traditional application launchers are gone and replaced with system settings and help files. We saw the Help window and globe last release, and this release we are introduced to 2 tutorial icons. I say icons because the actual tutorial programs are not functional. One does open a window place

holder, but the other does nothing at this point. There's a little java guy that opens what I suppose is a java development tool. I didn't get to look at that app for more than a few seconds as it triggered my first system lockup. The icon to launch the background changer as well as the shutdown icon have moved over to join the other similiar icons towards the left of the panel. The shutdown action is still a bit buggy as using it only got the action as far as scrambling the display and then locking up the machine. On the far right of the panel are now icons for a quick change of the background to the default for each of the wallpaper categories. The three panoramic "Stanford" icons are gone from the upper left screen.



We met the wallpaper carrousel last time as well, but it deserves another mention. If you click on the icon that's a combination of the Stanford, leaf, and star icon it opens the background settings app. With arrows to rotate the carrousel, one can preview each wallpaper in turn. Click OK and it sets the new background. You can sort them out by category if you wish. Those are panoramic, image, and layered. The image backgrounds are nice mostly landscapes that do nothing more than move a little as you move your cursor close to the edge of the screen. The layered wallpapers are kinda cool in that they rotate just a enough to give the illusion that the objects in the background are moving while the ones in the foreground remain stationary, or vice versa. That's a nice effect. Then of course the panoramic wallpapers are the ones that you can click from edge of the desktop to change to another view of the scenery. Supposedly if one takes a screenshot of all four they should line up. But this time as last time, I can get three to line up but the fourth is a little off. Another drawback is they don't continue on around in the same direction. You can click to the fourth, but then have to come back. So, it's not an overblown "cube" if you will... Still fairly neat as these things go.



The menu is much more logical and easier to use this time. In 2.3 the menu was presented in "stacks" and launched from the right side of the launchbar to the middle of the screen. They were awkward and clumsy, basically hard to navigate. This time we have a more traditonal menu. Its start icon rests in a more orthodox location, the very left of the bottom of the screen. You might still think of it as a "stack" but it's really a miniature menu. Upon mouse hover it zooms to normal size and one can click a subheading for corresponding applications. Applications are still sparce and I didn't see anything new. Some versions have been upgraded, but nothing new added.

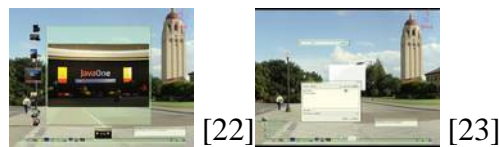


I do believe the apps might even be more buggy that the last release. I had more than a few that wouldn't even open and several that locked the system up prompting the use of the hardware reset button. In the office menu we find abiword and it appeared to function fairly well. We also find Contact 3D, Profuse 3D, and Chart 3D. Those wouldn't start. The remaining item is CosmoScheduler 3D. It opened and appeared to not have changed since last release other than locking the system up.

In the internet menu we find gaim and firefox that worked as designed, but googler is still very buggy and didn't work well at all. K1 (the history application) tried to work, but the system began bogging down rapidly. I feared another lock up was imminent and closed it rather quickly. The system remained very sluggish after that. Blackgoat hasn't changed either, still being a skeletal non-functional email application. The game pingpong opened, but it ran a demo. I couldn't seem to find the right key combination to actually try to play.



In the media menu we find zoetrope and algea3D. Zoetrope seems to be a photoviewer consisting of a main viewer window and a 3d thumbnail carousel. Just as the last time, the vertical carousel functioned, but I couldn't get the picture in the main view to change to any of the supplied samples. Algea3D is little more than a proof of concept application with the goal of being a media player. It did indeed open, but it wouldn't open any media files asked of it.



Under the hood we find kernel 2.6.16, Xorg 6.9.0 and nvidia 8178 drivers. LG3D is based on Slax and in fact they use the Slax lilo screen with a slackware boot splash. The system appeared to run a little better at first, but it did not take it long before it became sluggish and slow in responding. I had several lock ups, one time just from opening a terminal. The desktops looks a bit better due to more logical placement and organization of the menu and launcher icons. There are still some very nice 3d effects like the way closing windows fly and disappear off the right of the screen and the way the clock zooms off and back when you click the blue dot to change its appearance. However, the 3d rotation of open windows appeared to be removed this time. Overall the whole release is still very much experimental and not much more than a proof of concept at this point. It's fun to take for a test spin, but don't plan on doing any real work or play from it.

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