

411 on 2005

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Created 17/04/2005 - 10:25pm

Submitted by srlinuxx on Sunday 17th of April 2005 10:25:26 PM Filed under [MDV](#) [1] [Reviews](#) [2] [-s](#) [3]



[4]Mandriva, created in 1998, is a fast and stable binary based operating system. Their goal is to be the easiest to use distribution of the GNU/Linux operating system available. Mandriva 2005 is a milestone for MandrivaLinux as it's the first release under the new name.

Mandriva 2005, released to club members on April 13, is said to also mark the beginning of a slower one-release-per-year cycle. As a result, they have also adopted a new naming scheme. Moving from the familiar numerical versioning, we will now see names based on the year of release. It appears they are backing away from their bleeding-edge reputation as well, despite mixed feeling from the community. This is reportedly in response to requests from users and customers for a greater investment of time into the development of new features and functions. In Mandriva 2006, due out fall of 2005, they will be integrating unspecified Conectiva technology. They are hoping with a new name, new features and a new release cycle will come a new reputation. Perhaps 2005 is the beginning of that.

Featuring a 2.6.11.6 kernel, Firefox 1.0.2, The Gimp 2.2, GNOME 2.8.3, KDE 3.3, gcc 3.4.3, openoffice.org 1.1.4, Mandriva is striving to be the operating system of choice not only amongst Linux users, but computer users worldwide - both consumer and enterprise.

So what's new?

- Under the hood:

- Deltarpm

from SuSE it is aimed at providing smaller updates for MDK 10.2. Basically, a `.delta.rpm` is a binary diff between two RPMs with the header of the new package copied to the new `.delta.rpm`. This means

the resulting rpm acts as a real rpm: you can query files on it, check deps, etc. but you can't install delta rpms directly.

Mandriva provides an easy way to make delta rpms using "mkdeltarpm" in the following manner:

```
$ mkdeltarpm <old package> <new package>
```

so for example:

```
$ ./mkdeltarpm old/xfspgms-2.6.3-1mdk.i586.rpm new/xfspgms-2.6.131mdk.i586.rpm
```

- Dynamic File System Monitoring

The fam daemon, which was the default tool for providing notification to userspace about modifications to the filesystem, was plagued with problems, primarily related to locking of devices. For Mandrakelinux 10.2, famd is being replaced by gamin which eliminates many of these problems.

- New urpmi features

- a new option --retry was added, to specify how often a mirror should be retried.
- urpmi can now use iso image as a removable media.
- you can now use variable in media url, for more flexibility.

- Magicdev is replaced by gnome-volume-manager and HAL.

Magicdev, the software that used to be in charge of mounting usb key on the desktop, is replaced by gnome-volume-manager and HAL.

- multiarch

In order to enhance support of 32 bit development on a 64 bit architecture, a new system has been added to sort arch dependent files.

- Perl

Perl has been built without thread support.

- aspell

IsPELL is now completely replaced by aspell, which is still being actively developed.

- On the Surface

- Installation

- The installer was improved and now uses compressed loopback as found in MandrakeMove. This makes it possible to mount a compressed filesystem like a block device and seamlessly decompress its data while accessing it, allowing one to squeeze more out of the cdrom than the normal uncompressed space will allow.
- You can now use isos on the disk. This means one doesn't have to extract all isos to a central directory to use more than the first iso. Once upon a time if you wanted to use isos on your

disk as an install media, the installer only saw the first iso image. Anything needed from the others would have to be installed after boot of system. Now one can just specify the directory holding the isos and the installer will now see them all. Wonderful exciting improvement!

- KDE

- Kde 3.3.2 has been chosen over kde 3.4 for its maturity. However many bugfixes and some important new features (kpdf, gdm theme support for kdm) were backported by the Mandrakelinux KDE team into the packages included.
- Changes to the Kmenu Button
 - In order to highlight the Kmenu button in a more obvious fashion, a text label has been added that says "menu". However this can be removed by editing `~/.kde/share/config/kickerrc` and adding `kmenutext=false`
- New Look Login Manager
 - There is a new feature in the default login manager (KDM) for this release which allows it to be themed like GDM. The default theme is quite attractive and functional, however you can revert to the older kdm behavior by editing `/etc/kde/kdm/kdmrc` to reflect `UseTheme=false`.

- Gnome

- For stability reasons the version of GNOME included is 2.8.3. Some features include:
 - gnome-control-center improvements including:
 - Added desktop file for the font method.
 - theme-thumbailer doesn't require an absolute path
 - updated translations (bg, da, id, it, nso, sq, zh_CN, zu)
 - gdm:
 - Do not init the wm twice if `gdm_wm_init` is called twice.
 - Always destroy dialog widget in greeter to fix non-fatal error dialogs from hanging around.
 - Added Afrikaans, Northern Sotho, South African English, and Zulu to language translations.
 - basic bug fixes, new translations, and added documentation all over.

- Sound

- Sound multiplexing with ALSA
 - Now, applications that use the ALSA api for playing sound will automatically use the `dmix` plugin by default on sound cards that do not support hardware mixing.
 - `dnsoop` plugin is also set up, thus allowing several applications to record simultaneously from the same sound card.
- TiMidity MIDI synthesizer
 - Now TiMidity, a MIDI playback engine, can be executed as a ALSA sequencer client. This means it can act as a software synthesizer.

- X.org

X.org version 6.8.x is now shipping with an experimental extension called Composite. This means you can enable transparency in your X environments. They warn of stability issues with this feature and disable it by default. Please see the notes in my [Fluxbox article](#) [5] to enable.

- Multimedia keyboards

Newer multimedia keyboards can now be configured via the keyboarddrake applet in the Mandrake Control Center. GNOME and KDE have already been configured with certain default actions for common multimedia keys.

- Misc:

- MCC has now an expert option to display advanced tools.
- Mozilla suite has been replaced by Firefox, Thunderbird and nvu.
- Samba can now automatically share new CUPS printers.
- Network interfaces are now initiated in the background to speed up the boot process.
- XDG menu specification is being used to generate the menus.

My Experience:

The installation was painless and quick. The changes under the bonnet made for a more stable and faster install yet the interface remained familiar in appearance. The sequence of events and the manner executed are very similar to Mandrake installs of releases past. Most return users will find that comforting while the ease and polish will impress newcomers. Mandriva's installer has been one of their best selling points since the very beginning. It's nice to see they are only improving in that area.

Worth mentioning, however, is the new install and lilo splash/boot screens. Every Linux enthusiast loves a penguin, I have no doubts. But Mandriva's new mascot is almost scary. It's a huge close up focusing into the starry eyes of Tux. When I say starry eyes, I don't mean a 'dreamingly longing look', I mean the pupils are big stars. He looks either drunk or beaten or zombie-ish. And it *is* scary - almost nightmarish. I quote a friend who states, "...looks like it is possessed! Kinda fiendish..." I recommend not booting around your 4-year old. You will encounter "Monster Tux" again at certain areas such as the kde loading/progress screen, but those are easily changed. I hope Mandriva rethinks this image before their next release. I kid you not when I say I literally jumped when I first booted my install floppy! This is a small issue in the grand scheme of things I realize, but image is everything. If Mandriva is hoping for a more professional reputation, I'm not sure Monster Tux lends itself to that.

The default KDE desktop is nice and professional looking. As in the past it includes icons for removable media and multimedia apps associated with webcams or tv cards as well as the usual Trash and Home icons. The default panel/launcher comes with a larger start menu start button featuring the label "Menu" as well as the usual Desktop button. Also included is a button for Firefox, Kontact, Emacs, and Konsole. The system tray includes quick launchers for Network Monitoring, MdkOnline, Kwikdisk, Screen resize and rotate, sound mixer, and the kOrganizer alarm daemon.



[6]

The menu(s) are a scaled-down, neat, and organized newbie friendly version containing logical, easy-to-understand categories, subcategories, and entries for most popular tasks. Utilizing a centralized XDG menu allows for more consistent menus across the different desktop environments and allowing for user edits to also cross the desktop divide.



[7]

New in the Mandrakelinux Control Center is some updated more modern icons and faster operation. I believe the ups monitoring set-up under the Hardware section might be new since my last look around. However the new multimedia keyboard configuration is a wonderful addition. It's always been possible to configure these extra keys, but it was always more trouble than it was worth to me. Thank goodness for the boot up splash config, but unfortunately the only included theme is the Mandrakelinux Monster Tux. We can uncheck use graphical boot and show theme under console.



[8]

Rpmdrake is a familiar face as well. As with most other applications in this new Mandriva, it seems faster and more stable than previous versions. It will be interesting to see what happens to rpmdrake in future releases given the plan to integrate Connectiva technology - and that being so vastly different, especially in the area of package handling. Can we speculate this may be the reason for no new features in rpmdrake?



[9]

The list of included applications and desktop environments is as always unsurpassed. This release of Mandriva is definitely a step in the right direction for Mandrivalinux. I was impressed by the speed of operations and the stability of the system. I haven't felt this good about a Mandrake/Mandriva release in a long time. One might miss the bleeding edge applications until they work within this new stable release, then one can appreciate the effort Mandriva is making eliminate bugs and provide a reliable system.

This "transitional" release is not only a milestone, but yet the end of an era. I look forward to seeing how Mandriva incorporates the technology acquired with Connectiva, yet I also bid a fond farewell to the Mandrake on which I cut my Linux teeth. However you choose to look at the situation, you owe it to yourself to test drive this release. If you choose to run Mandriva full time, please consider supporting them by ordering a [boxed set](#) [10] or joining [the club](#) [11].

Please find posted in my gallery many [screenshots](#) [12] of [Mandriva Linux Limited Edition 2005](#) [13].

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- [4] <http://www.tuxmachines.org/images/mdk2005/desktop.jpg>

- [5] <http://www.tuxmachines.org/node/392>
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