Mandriva 2010 Spring

After assuming responsibility for the LXFDVDs some five years ago, my young padawan Mike is having a break, so I’m back for one month only. Two versions of one popular distro wasn’t enough for us this month, so we have included two versions each of Mandriva and OpenSUSE in a quad-booting überdisc. Turn the page for more on openSUSE 11.3, but we also have the latest release from Mandriva, 2010 Spring.

We thought at one point that there wouldn’t be another Mandriva to put on the disc as the company hit another financial crisis, but it’s back now with a new release.

The DVD contains both the live CD releases of Mandriva 2010 Spring, one for GNOME and KDE desktops. Select either of the Mandriva Live options on the DVD boot menu to load your preferred desktop. You can also install from the DVD with either of the Install Mandriva options, or you can install from the live environment using the Install On Hard Disk icon.

Each of the install options installs only the desktop it is using, but once installed you can install anything else you need, including alternate desktops, from the Mandriva Control Centre. Booting the live environment stops while you are asked a couple of questions – basically language and time zone – after that you can use it like a normal desktop, or run the installer to install it permanently to your hard drive.

Although the appearance is different, the basic process is similar to that of the OpenSUSE installer described on the next pages. The partitioner can be told to use empty space, create empty space by resizing existing partitions or take over the whole disk. However, there is no option to review what will be done, so make sure you check your settings at the partitioning step. When installation is complete, reboot and remove the DVD.

The first time you boot Mandriva it will ask you to set a root password.

“Mandriva is still alive and kicking – this is the new 2010 Spring in KDE flavour.”

Before you put the DVD in your drive, please make sure you read, understand and agree to the following:

The Linux Format DVDs are thoroughly tested for all known viruses, and are independently certified virus-free before duplication. We recommend that you always run a reliable and up-to-date virus checking program on any new software.

While every care is taken in the selection, testing and installation of DVD software, Future Publishing can accept no responsibility for disruption and/or loss to your data or your computer system that may occur while using this disc, the programs or the data on it. You are strongly advised to have up-to-date, verified backups of all your important files.

Please read individual licences for terms of use.

Defective discs

In the unlikely event of your Linux Format coverdisc being in any way defective, please visit our support site at www.linuxformat.com/dvdsupport for further assistance. If you would prefer to talk to a member of our reader support team, telephone +44 (0) 1225 822743.

Mandriva is still alive and kicking – this is the new 2010 Spring in KDE flavour.
Tiny Core Linux, Scratch, Meld

With a quadruple-booting DVD you would be forgiven for thinking that there would be no room for any more distributions on the disc. You reckoned without Tiny Core Linux, at 10MB (yes, megabytes). Not only is it small, it is also incredibly fast to boot. It may not have KDE’s eye candy, but it will run on anything made in the last 20 years, which makes it useful for anyone who has old hardware lying about. The booted system has X but very little software, which can be added using the AppBrowser to build a system that does just what you need, whether for portable lightweight use, as a custom rescue system or to turn an old computer into a server for a specific task.

Dealing with diffs and modifications to configuration or program files can be difficult, especially when trying to merge them. Meld makes this far easier by displaying the two files side-by-side and highlighting the differences. You can then pick which alternative to take in each case to create a merged file. While hardcore admins and devs may be happy doing this in a console, Meld makes the process so much more friendly for mere mortals.

Getting kids to play with computers is easy, but getting them interested in programming is more of a challenge. Scratch is a programming system for children, developed at MIT. Programs written in Scratch can be shared on the web and even played in a browser.

Yakuake did extremely well in our terminals Roundup a few years ago and is still one of the best X terminals. Unlike Xterm, Konsole or any of the others, this is not a fixed window on your desktop. Instead, the terminal drops down from the top of the screen, Quake-style, when you press F12. It is incredibly useful, especially on a small-screened device like a netbook or small laptop, as it means you have a terminal always available without using up any screen space.

Apache is a popular web server, and rightly so, but it can be overkill for a small site or intranet. Cherokee is a lightweight web server that is still capable of handling large sites and loads. One of the main differences between Cherokee and other web servers is that it has its own configuration program built-in. By connecting to port 9090 you can set up the server in your web browser. By default, this is limited to connections from the same computer, but you can change this if your server is headless or does not have a web browser.

There are plenty of programs for listening to online radio but they are often just too big and obtrusive. You really don’t need the might of Amarok or Rhythmbox just to listen to the breakfast show while checking your email. Radio Tray does just what it says, on the tin: it’s a small applet that sits in the system tray and plays internet radio. It stays out of the way, just showing an icon that pops up a list of stations when clicked on.

There are fewer games than usual, partly because I’m less of a gamer than Mike but mainly because there is too much other good stuff on the disc to leave room for more than two – so we had to make them good ones. Battle for Wesnoth is a turn-based strategy game where you build up an army to fight battles and win beautiful maidens. Maybe. You can play in single-player mode or take part in online multiplayer combat. Chromium has probably seen a large increase in downloads and website traffic after Google decided to give its web browser the same name, but this is a well-established space shoot-'em-up. Shooting is done with robotic fighters, controlled from the safety of the mothership, so kamikaze tactics can pay off.

Other software

Yakuake, Cherokee, Radio Tray

A Linux distro in only 10MB? Yes, it is possible, and it even has a nice (though grey) graphical desktop.
On the disc

One of the oldest surviving distros gets a feature-packed upgrade

Linux distribution

OpenSUSE 11.3

The latest openSUSE distro was released just in time for this month’s disc and we have two live environments for you to choose from, KDE and Gnome. Boot from the DVD in the usual way and choose either ‘OpenSUSE Live – Gnome’ or ‘OpenSUSE Live – KDE’. There are also options to install in the boot menu, but you only need these if you’re a bit short on memory, otherwise you can run the installer from the live environment.

The disc should then boot straight into your chosen desktop from where you can explore the various features available and use it just like a full Linux installation. Each of the live environments has a full set of software, although the choices differ to suit the desktops. Once you have played around with the live desktops and decided it is time to install, run the Live Installer icon from your preferred desktop. The installation process is straightforward, the only parts that tend to confuse people are partitioning and the bootloader. If this is the only OS on the disk, you can go with the defaults.

If you already have free space on the disk, Ya st (the OpenSUSE installer/config tool) will set that up for you. Otherwise you can use existing Linux partitions — say from the last distro you experimented with — or resize your existing partition to make room, which is what you would do when installing on a computer that currently runs Windows. The partitioning screen also has options to use encryption and LVM, which you can safely ignore unless you know you need them. The installer may try to download updates from the internet. It doesn’t ask first, so if you don’t want this, disable your network connection using the icon in the system tray. You then create a username and password — don’t forget these!

The next screen defines how you want the computer to boot. The default is to put the bootloader on the root partition, which is only of use if you have another distro on the computer and want to continue to use its bootloader. Otherwise you should enable Boot From MBR. After double-checking the installation settings, press the Install button and wait a few minutes. Once the installation is complete, you can reboot your computer and choose OpenSUSE from the menu.

“”The parts that confuse people are partitioning and the bootloader.””

Step by step: Installing OpenSUSE 11.3

1 Boot
Select your distro and desktop from the boot screen. The separate Install options are only needed if you are a bit low on memory.

2 Desktop
The DVD boots to your desktop, from where you can run the installer. You can also disable the network to avoid automatic downloads.

3 Partition
The installer has several options for partitioning your hard drive. If in doubt, the basic defaults are always a good choice.

The Gnome environment used by OpenSUSE has been substantially tweaked.

KDE 4.4.4 is also available – try the KDE live environment and install from there for a KDE desktop.
How do I…?

If you’re totally new to Linux, after installing Ubuntu you may be unsure how to do certain tasks. Here’s a list of the most common jobs and how to get them done…

- **Browse the web** Click on Computer > Firefox to launch the Firefox browser from Favourite Applications. If it is not there, click on More Applications and have a look in the Internet section.

- **Manipulate your files** Either use Computer > Nautilus or select the Places tab in the Computer menu for a choice of locations to view.

- **Play music and videos** Banshee Media Player, in Favourite Applications or the Multimedia section of More Applications, plays both video and audio files.

- **Rip and burn disc** Banshee can also rip CDs (it calls this importing) while Brasero, in the Multimedia section, is used for burning and copying discs.

- **Chat online** Launch Empathy from the Internet section for instant messaging, while XChat in the same section is used for IRC.

- **Configure the system** Yast is OpenSUSE’s all-encompassing configuration program, and you’ll find it on the right-hand side of the Computer menu.

- **Get new software** Computer > Install/Remove Software is all you need to access thousands of programs.

- **Shut down** Click on Computer then select Shutdown to get a choice of a reboot, suspend or full shutdown.

OpenSUSE’s requirements are relatively high, and the installer will complain if you have less than 1GB RAM available, although it is usable with half that amount of memory. You’ll also need at least 2.5GB of hard disk space for installation, although 10GB is a more reasonable minimum once you start installing extra software and saving your own files.

[4] **Password**
You get to create a user and set a password. This can be the password for the root user or you can set a different one on the next screen.

[5] **Final check**
Until now, your computer has not been touched. Check the settings here before letting the installer go to work on your disk.

[6] **Last step**
After rebooting, Yast will ask to perform the final setup of your new system.