Mandriva 2010 Spring

Is the latest release from Mandriva enough to keep it relevant? Bob Moss hopes that reports of the distro’s death are greatly exaggerated.

Our hope is that this is a step to a newer, more innovative Mandriva.

After reports of financial problems and not a word from Mandriva for the best part of half a year, we feared the worst for one of the longest-running and best-supported KDE distros. So we were relieved to get our hands on the long-overdue Mandriva 2010 Spring.

The traditional flavour uses the KDE 4 desktop and is a superb showcase for it. The interface feels snappy and you should experience almost none of the infamous KDE applet crashes, thanks to the work of the Mandriva developers. We’re a little confused as to why Mandriva uses a KDE 3-style KDE bar, when the default KDE 4 menu in OpenSUSE is far more functional and attractive.

You shouldn’t have to reach for the terminal very often thanks to the Control Centre (below) and the desktop settings applet, which you can quickly launch from the KDE panel.

Mandriva Control Centre

Quick launch
Look out for this icon in your KDE panel to launch Mandriva’s Control Centre quickly.

Software
You can manage software from here, or launch from the KDE menu.

Connectivity
Troubleshoot and fix network issues from this option.

Boot options
If Grub 2 gets you down, you can reconfigure it from here.

Manage hardware
Detect and analyse your already-configured hardware and drivers.

Desktop effects
Compiz and Metisse desktop effects are just one click away.

Print and scan
Printers and scanners are simple to set up using these tools.

The main changes over the last iteration are the inclusion of Moovida and Sage Math, plus updates for existing packages such as X.org and OpenOffice.org, all of which you can install from your existing package manager. Mandriva claims to have removed 25% of bloat from the install and decreased boot time, but we still found it a little sluggish compared with others. Hardware support is supposed to be improved (but OpenSUSE continues to just shade Mandriva in this area) and the installer now has a graphical partition manager.

You may be wondering what the incentive is to upgrade. Powerpack subscribers who have enjoyed the non-free components for a year will likely do so to ensure compatibility with these components, but users of the free versions may find upgrading is simply a show of support for Mandriva to keep producing releases. Our hope is that this is a step to a newer, more innovate Mandriva that challenges competitors head-on and produces releases that thrill and excite users with innovative new features and ideas.

Mandriva 2010 Spring
Developer: Mandriva
Web: www.mandriva.com
Price: Free or €49 (£41) for Powerpack

Features 6/10
Performance 7/10
Ease of use 7/10
Documentation 8/10

One of the best distros for newbies, but let’s see more innovation in future.

Rating 7/10