

Digikam 1.0



Can 'free' compete with Adobe's and Apple's wallet-busting pro photography packages? **Andy Channelle** grabs a horribly expensive camera to find out.

In brief...

» Photo collection manager for the KDE desktop. See also: *F-Spot*, *Picasa*, *Kalburn*.

There are three types of image editing package, and Linux is well served in all of them. At one end are the likes of *Picasa*, *iPhoto* and *F-Spot*, which are mainly designed to manage large collections with a little light editing thrown in. At the other are packages such as *Photoshop* and *Gimp*, which can be used for extensive artistic edits, but are based around individual images. Between these two are professional 'lightroom'-type apps that can be used to manage large collections and to process – but not necessarily edit – images. These enable you to view and manipulate colour or tonal ranges and apply some creative effects, but don't have tools such as brushes, layers and extensive text-handling features. These are often built around the concept of whittling down 60 images to find (or adapt) the perfect one.

“There's little lag when applying effects, even to your larger images.”

If you're after this last type of package, then *Digikam* is likely to be your first choice. The program is built on KDE but also works well in Gnome. Visually, it ships in standard KDE garb, but can be reskinned using the theme menu to provide a more Adobe-style experience. The full-screen option does a great job of getting rid of the rest of the interface so that you can focus purely on your images.

It's swift and elegant in gallery mode, where you can navigate your collection of images or sort by date, camera,

» **Fuzzy Search** enables you to look for similar images based on colour, shape, or a rough sketch.



» **The Light Table is a great way to compare a RAW image with its JPEG counterpart. You can synchronise pan and zoom as you inspect the two images.**

resolution or any other bit of metadata. You can also add your own tags.

Edit mode, where you can make changes to your pictures, is accessed by double-clicking an image. There's a nice selection of effects and processes, from Blur and Sharpen to Spread, Solarise and Paint effects. If you're used to *Gimp*'s configuration overload when it comes to effects, *Digikam*'s lack of options may be a disappointment. But that would be to misunderstand the application's *raison d'être*.

Compare and contrast

Even if the processes can be uninspired, the available tools in *Digikam* work well and there's little lag when applying effects, even to your larger images.

A key feature of this release is the Light Table – an excellent tool for comparing pairs of images. It'll become an essential part of your selection process if you take hundreds of photos and then whittle them down to a few.

As you might expect from a package that aspires to the 'professional' tag, RAW handling is exceptional and *Digikam* easily dealt with the various sub-formats that our cameras provided.

When outputting ready to print or for the web, the software's processing puts the control in your hands, though again finer control over colour balance, saturation and tone would be welcome.

Once you've perfected your images, there are plenty of output options,

including sending the results direct to Facebook, Flickr or other online services, outputting to your iPod, or creating an HTML gallery for inclusion on a website. We'd like to see a similar range of options in the import section, such as the ability to use *Picasa*'s facial recognition tools to tag multiple images automatically. However, the options that are available do their jobs well.

Good performance is vital in an application of this type as you'll be shifting around lots of high-resolution images. *Digikam* works quickly when moving around lots of thumbnails and the lag when opening an image was acceptable on a Core 2 Duo with 2GB RAM. *Digikam* is therefore a worthwhile step up from *F-Spot*, but what you gain in facilities you lose in simplicity. **LXF**

LINUX Verdict

Digikam 1.0

Developer: KDE/Digikam
Web: www.digikam.org
Price: Free

Features	7/10
Performance	6/10
Ease of use	7/10
Documentation	5/10

» *This release makes a solid start on lightroom processing, but it could use a few more options.*

Rating 6/10