The NEW PCLinuxOS Magazine

Fall 2010

The KDE 4 SC Special Edition

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Welcome From The Assistant Editor

Welcome from Meemaw!

Hello! Welcome to a special issue of The NEW PCLinuxOS Magazine devoted to KDE4. We have compiled all the KDE4 articles from past year into this one special issue. Our cover was designed by parnote, and takes us on a journey through the many appearances of KDE over the years. Along with that journey, I would like to highlight some of the developmental milestones of KDE.

KDE was founded in 1996 by Matthias Ettrich, who was a university student in Germany at the time. He wanted to create a unified desktop environment and set of applications that would make the Unix operating system work more smoothly.

KDE1 was released in July of 1998. The release statement said, "KDE seeks to fill the need for an easy to use desktop for Unix workstations, similar to the desktop environments found under the MacOS or Window95/NT. "

KDE2 was released in October of 2000. Quoting the release statement, "With the experience gained from developing KDE 1, we almost completely re-engineered KDE 2 to make it even more intuitive, powerful and user friendly" and offered even more applications to its package.

KDE3 was released in April of 2002, announcing "The KDE Project today announced the immediate availability of KDE 3.0, the third generation of KDE, a free and powerful desktop for Linux and other UNIXes." This is the version with which many of us started our Linux adventures. In fact, PCLinuxOS

stuck with KDE 3.x as the desktop environment for its main version up through PCLinuxOS 2009.2.

KDE4 *Software Compilation* was released in January of 2008. However, it was such a departure from KDE3 that many users disliked it, complaining that it was unstable. KDE 4 embraces, in part, the Nepomuk project, which represents a new way of thinking about the computer desktop and the interrelationship of data across that desktop. Some asked for KDE 3.5 to be forked and continued (via the Trinity Desktop Environment project), and many have stuck with KDE 3.x until very recently. The first version of KDE4 that was a standard feature in a PCLinuxOS Live CD was KDE4.4.2, which was included in the new PCLinuxOS 2010 when it was

released in April of this year. The main departure is the change from the structure of the environment itself, from the former desktop, kicker and possibly the use of superKaramba to the introduction of the Plasma desktop, which was designed to merge the previous components into a desktop that looks sharper and works better. We have since been upgraded to KDE4.5, and most everyone's systems are working well, despite the rocky start of KDE 4. However, holdouts remain, as many users have yet to embrace KDE 4.

The magazine staff believes that the combination of these articles into this special issue will give you a handy, easy to access guide with everything right where you need it. Enjoy!

Meemaw, Asst. Editor
PCLinuxOS Magazine

KDE 4.3 and Windows 7 Comparison

by Andrew Huff (athaki)

Today I'm comparing the interfaces for Windows 7 and KDE 4.3, making note of how they compare, differ and which one is best for 'Joe User'.

Windows 7

I'll start with Windows 7, which is one of the most anticipated releases for the Microsoft camp ever (especially due to the numerous bad reviews of Vista). Windows 7 comes in six different versions, three of which will be available to the consumer at retail: Windows 7 Home Premium, Professional and Ultimate. Windows 7 Starter is targeting installation on netbooks, while Windows Home Basic is intended for sale only in emerging markets. The sixth version, Windows 7 Enterprise, falls right below Windows Ultimate, and is intended for volume licensing.

Most users will go for the Home Premium edition, unless they are looking for specific business-related features of Windows 7 such as: connecting to a domain, operating as a Remote Desktop server, file system encryption, presentation mode and Windows XP mode (requires an additional 1 GB of memory, 15 GB hard drive space, and a processor capable of hardware virtualization). Windows 7 Ultimate will not have any of the 'Ultimate Extras' that Vista had.

In the end, if you're just going to be doing basic word processing, listening to music, watching DVD/Blue Ray/Video files and surfing the internet, Windows 7 Home Premium will be the one best suited.

Windows 7 does have a smaller initial memory footprint, and programs feel a little snappier than on Vista, but in my experience the differences were negligible from when I used Vista. User Account Control does seem less 'in your face' than in Vista. However, I'm personally so used to it that it's difficult for me to determine when it's not notifying me about something. In the interface department, the taskbar is larger (reminiscent of KDE) and when one right-clicks, one gets this nice menu:
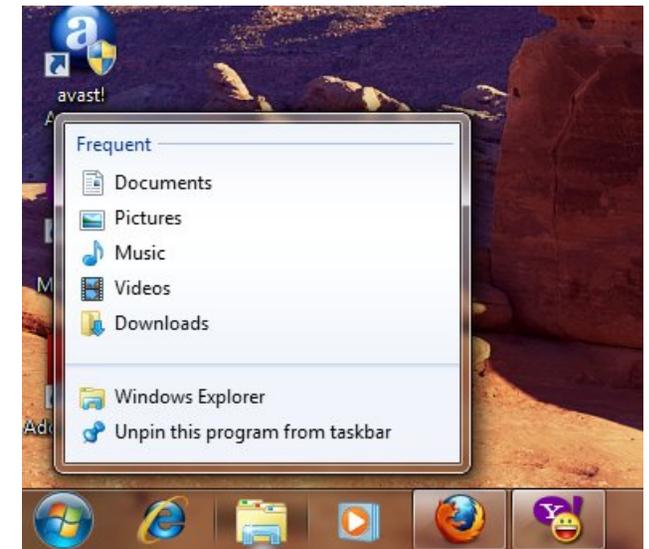
This is nice, but how many average people would actually right click on a taskbar icon? The start menu is not too different from Vista, but it does make 'shutdown' the default option.

The ribbon interface has also been incorporated into Wordpad and Paint (screen shot on the following page).

Windows 7 also includes something called 'Libraries', which combines folders of your choosing

into one window. For example, the documents library includes the folders 'My Documents' and 'Public Documents.' One can add folders to the default libraries (Documents, Pictures, Videos and Music) or create their own.


PCLinuxOS KDE 4.3

In the PCLinuxOS version of KDE 4.3, the PC menu remains mostly similar to the KDE 3.5.10 version. However, the 'factory shipped' version of KDE 4.3 comes with an empty desktop, which is similar to the default desktop of Ubuntu. KDE 4.3 has a dedicated taskbar button for any media that could be inserted into the computer. This ranges from DVD and CDs to flash media and camera cards. (below)

Another aspect is the folder preview option when one hovers over a folder on the desktop: - - - >

Memory use on KDE 4.3 seems rather efficient. On my 2GB RAM machine, KDE 4 is using 221MB with Firefox open, which could mean that it could be installed successfully on computers with 256MB of RAM. Windows 7, on the other hand, has a minimum memory requirement of 1 GB. The biggest difference for users switching from KDE 3.5 to KDE 4.3 would be getting used to the new file manager, Dolphin.
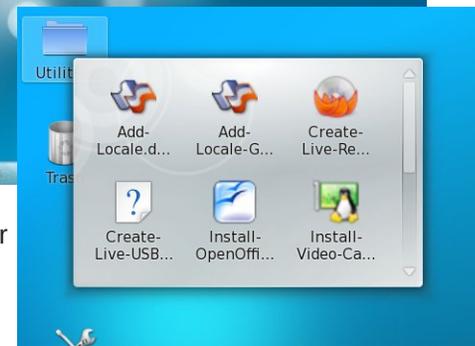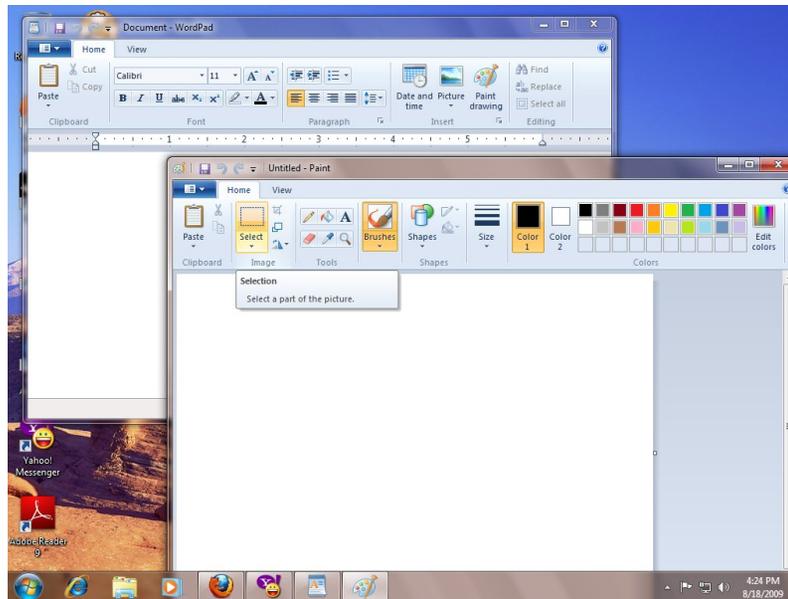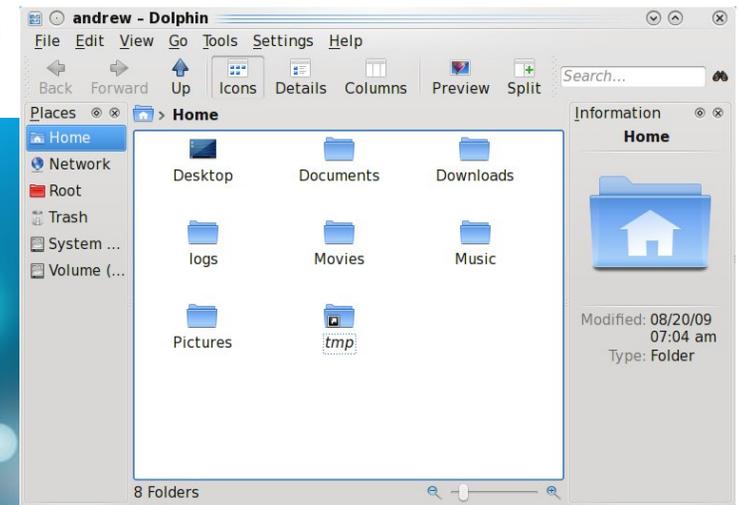
The interface is very intuitive and straightforward. It shouldn't be too big of a problem for new users to use.

So, which version should 'Joe User' install? As stated above, if they're just doing basic tasks, Windows 7 Home Premium would fit

their bill. However, as we all know, PCLinuxOS is more than capable of doing those same tasks as well. PCLinuxOS also has the good fortune of being 'gratis', whereas one would have to pay at least $119.99 US to acquire an upgrade license for Windows 7.

The full retail version of Windows 7 Home Premium will set you back $199.99 US. Windows 7 Professional (equivalent to the Vista Business Edition) will cost $199.99 US for the upgrade, and $299.99 US for the full retail version. If you opt for Windows 7 Ultimate, the upgrade version will cost $219.99 US, and the full retail version will run you $319.99 US. Microsoft has offered heavily discounted "pre-orders" of Windows 7 Upgrade, allowing Windows XP and Windows Vista users to upgrade to Windows 7 Home Premium for $49.99 US, and to Windows 7 Professional for only $99.99 US.

It's also important to keep in mind that these prices reflect only the price of the operating system. Under a Windows operating system, you still have to pay for the applications that make you productive. Running PCLinuxOS on your computer gives you not only the operating system free of charge, but also free access to all of the more than 11,000 programs in the PCLinuxOS repository.

Aside from the cost, Windows 7 has much "loftier" hardware requirements. The 32-bit version of Windows 7 requires 1 GB of memory, a video card with a minimum of 128 MB of memory, and 16 GB of hard drive space. The 64-bit version of Windows 7 requires double the memory (2 GB) and 20 GB of hard drive space. Contrast this to KDE 4.3, which requires only 4 GB of hard drive space, and will run

on a computer with as little as 256 MB of memory, although 512 MB of memory and 10 GB of hard drive space are recommended.

So there you have it – a comparison of KDE 4.3 and Windows 7. Where do you want to go today?
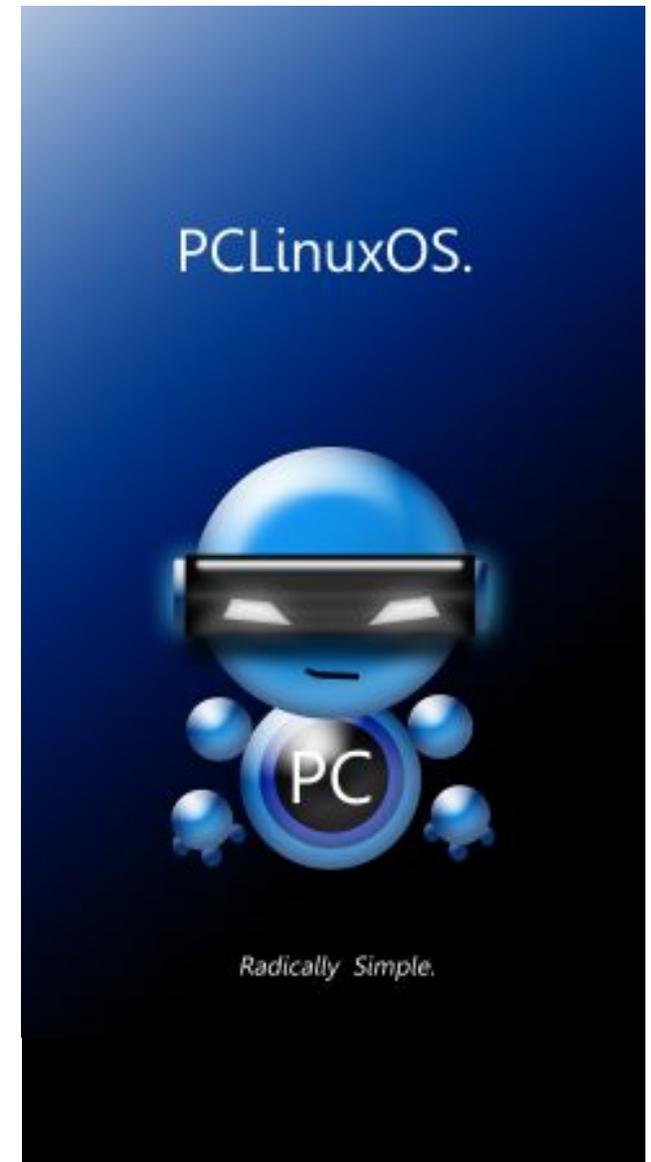
A User's KDE 4.3 Experience on PCLinuxOS

by The-One-Who-Uses-It

PCLinuxOS is one of the eaiest Linux distribution to install. It is adapted for new users migrating from Windows and allay them of their fears of Linux. It is also used by both seasoned and veteran Linux users. A platoon of community users have risen to the ranks of packagers and developers, wireless and networking gurus, the artists and desktop-decorators, the testers and ISO remaster masters, etc. PCLinuxOS is more than just a Linux distribution. For many, it is a way of life.

As technology sets its pace towards development and the operating system future, PCLinuxOS is right on the heels of big names in Linux. Although PCLinuxOS wasn't on the KDE 4 summit, when Mandriva, Fedora, [add other Linux distros who shipped KDE 4 early in its development] shipped theirs, main developer, Texstar was the smarter for his wait-and-see strategy. It paid off (at least in terms of the stability of the version) and pleased a multitude of PCLinuxOS users who had now upgraded. Short stories and posts of which are abundant in the forum.

KDE 4.3.1 on PCLinuxOS still has its kinks and potholes but a wise PCLinuxOS user's words comes into mind - "No operating system is perfect." The PCLinuxOS repository still lacks several KDE 4 applications that were available on KDE 3.5.x but lPCLinuxOS users are assured that these upgrades will be packaged and distributed sooner rather than later. The PCLinuxOS Support Forum has a thread (and hopefully a separate section) for KDE 4.

This article is about my personal experiences using KDE 4.3.x duing the last couple of months. And I should add that it was rather radically simple and satisfying. It was comparable to watching my best friend's son learning to turn over and crawl, walk, run, jump, swim, etc. Certainly, I ran into kernel panics and hanged reboots, and had reinstalled several times but those initial testings were done on VirtualBox so nothing was really lost. Back then KDE 4, was still a hard conversion but leave it to the PCLinuxOS developers and they've come up with the ingenius task-kde4 that ensures an error-free transition to the latest DE version.

For the benefit of this review, I recreated my current installation using VirtualBox so I might be able to include snapshots of the default images for easy references. Typically, any PCLinuxOS install would do but I opted for the best and sensible choice, Minime09. This way, the recreation is minimal.

There are a few important things to bear in mind. Backup your most vital and important files. I am in the habit of saving to a removable hard disk and making remasters. Apart from the visible folders, you might want to take a look at the hidden files which contain your Firefox bookmarks and addons, newsfeeds, received and sent emails, 3D effects settings, etc. The PCLinuxOS Support Forum and #pclinuxos-support on

Freenode are at a click of an application to help any users with issues and queries.

I had a clean install ... well not exactly. As root I cleaned up all the /home partition of all hidden dot files but left my humongous music, photos and video collections intact. On installing Minime09, I only reformatted the root partition. It took me a bit of work to get some of my old configuration that I had backed up back in place but they're back. I know this may sound a bit foolish but I did get a fresh KDE 4.3.1 to look like my old KDE 3.5.10 setup leaving the KDE 4 touch and feel to it. It seem to be faster, responsive, stylish and more importantly, stable than the previous. Why did I want to set it up to look like KDE 3.5.10? Well, if you are curious, you'll just have

A fresh install of PCLinuxOS Minime 09
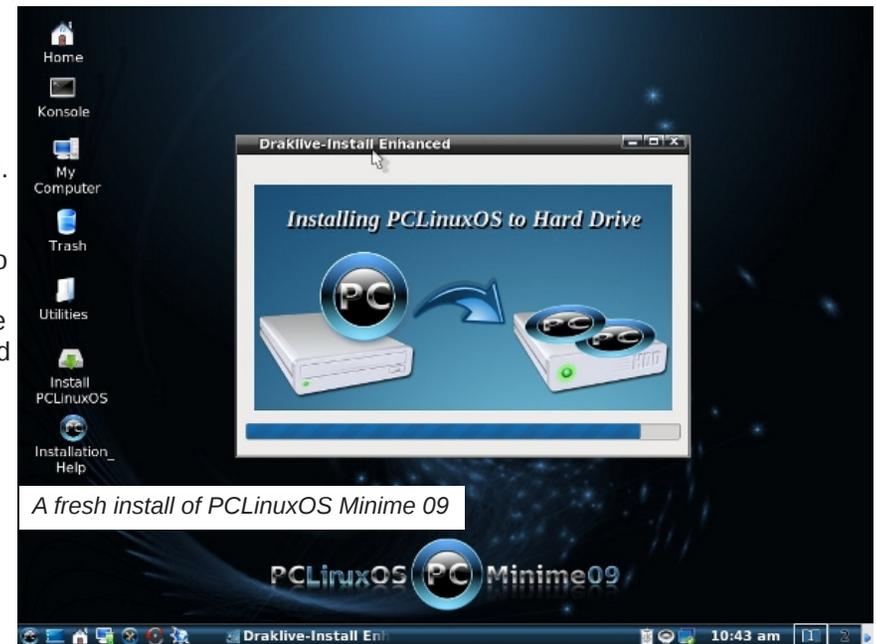
to post the question on Sandbox in the PCLinuxOS Forum..

In addition, I have modified the GRUB background and splash together with the KDM login manager and KSplash to match the KDE 4's Air theme. The components and configurations are available but since I am not a packager, I have not made it available to anyone who might like to use them. However, if you are interested, you may make the request on the PCLinuxOS Magazine forum.
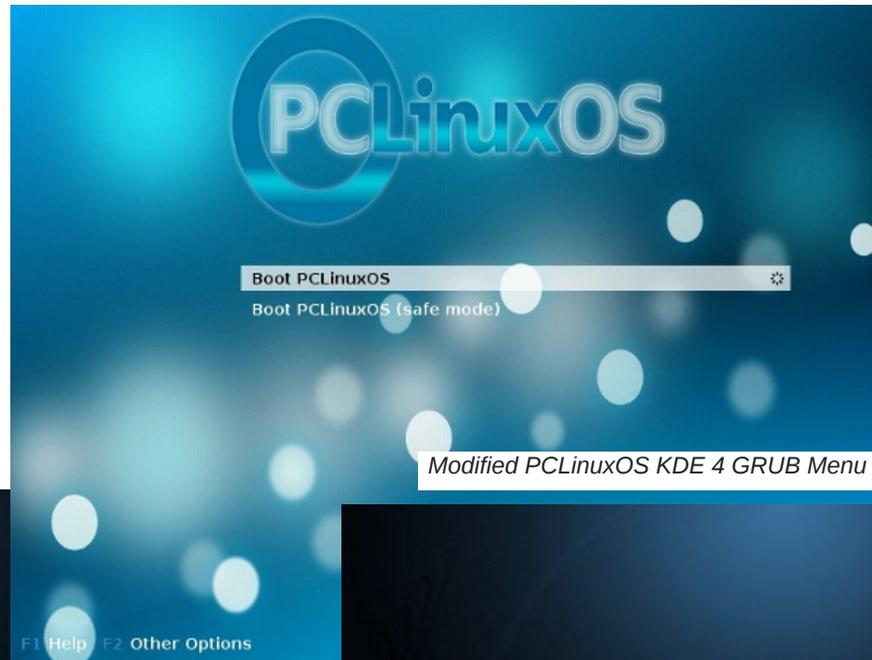
Modified PCLinuxOS KDE 4 GRUB Menu
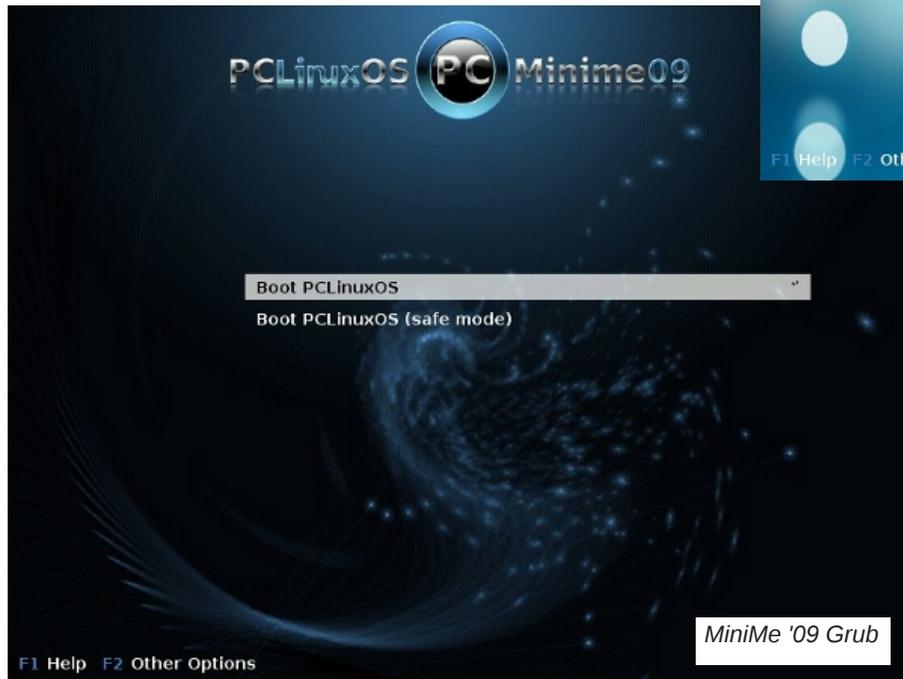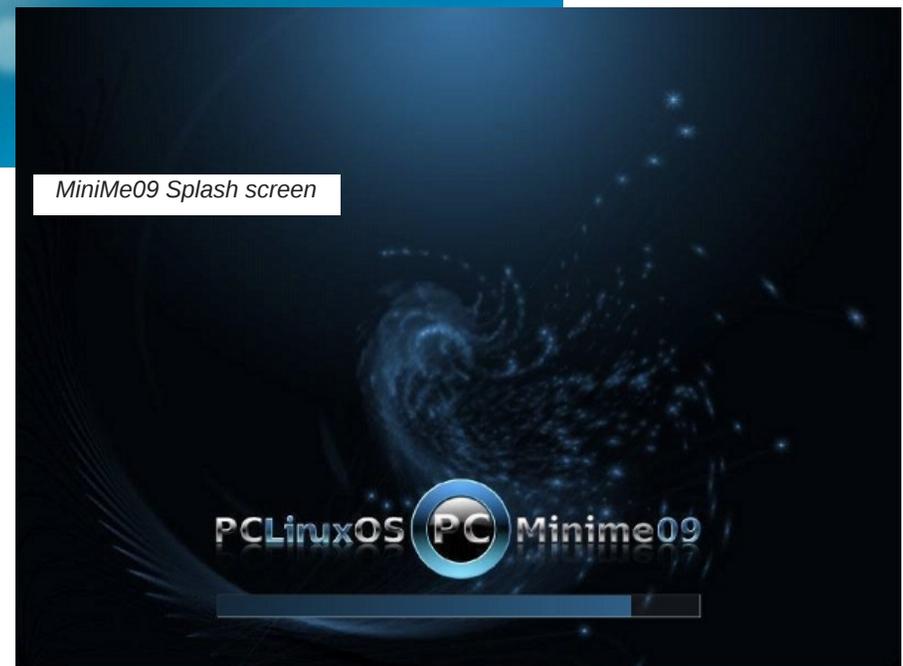
MiniMe09 Splash screen

MiniMe '09 Grub

Like I mentioned, there are still a shortfall of task-specific applications but overall KDE 4.3.1 is a usuable DE. Obviously, we won't have the same preferences so I will not mention my preferred applications like Firefox, KMail, KVirc, GIMP, Inkscape, Amarok, Kino, VLC, etc. but instead comment on the essential system applications and their interactions with KDE 4.3.1 in general.

There was a time long ago when I wondered which was important of the GUIs - Synaptic or the PCLinuxOS Control Center. Yeah, there'll be those who'd say they're rip-offs but that point is moot. For me, they're neither or both. Linux, at a time almost forgotten was apt-get and drakconf. These days, the icons that launches specific tasks are advances towards the right direction. Most won't have to worry about the CLI and focus on getting the job done instead. Still, the command line is the vital nerve to the kernel heart.

Synaptic on KDE 4.3.1 is pretty much the same whether you run it on KDE 3.5.10, GNOME, XFCE, LXDE or E17. It's selecting the applications you'd want to upgrade, install or remove. The PCLinuxOS Control Center is the same as well.

KDE Splash for MiniMe09 (below)
KDE 4.3.1 (right)
and a modification (below right)
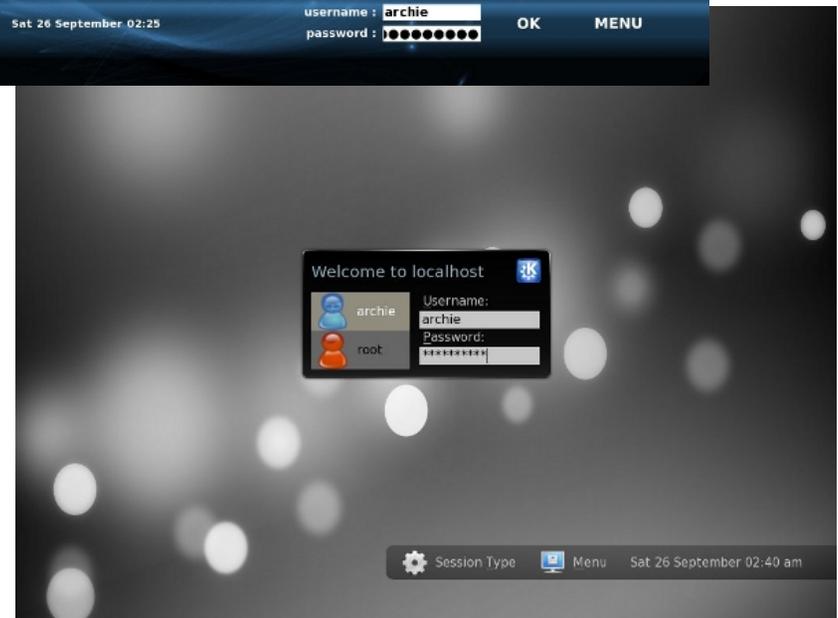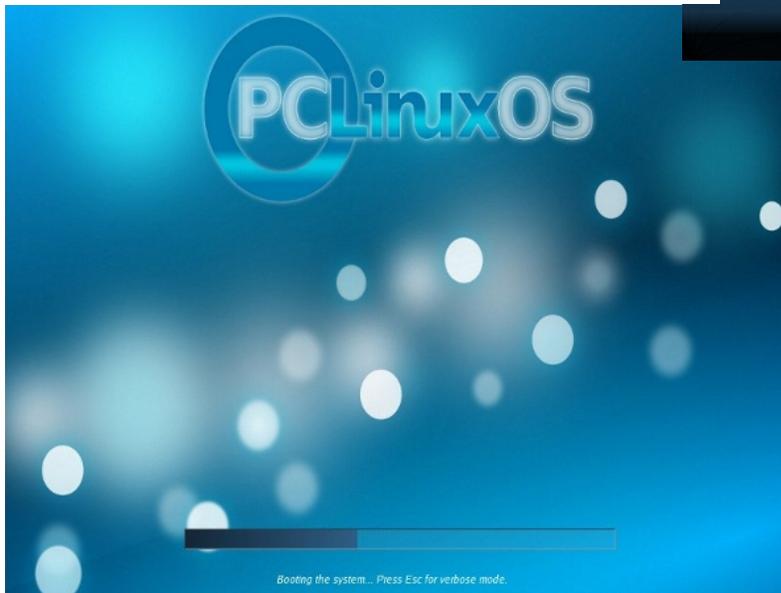
Modeified Login Manager for KDE 4.3.1

Splash for KDE 4.3.1

KDE Splash for MiniMe09

Modified Splash for KDE 4.3.1

One that was actually different is the KDE Control Center. The tree layout is different and the sections (though logical) needed getting familiar with. One minor issue I have is with displaying Xinerama. For whatever reason, I cannot seem to get a 2560x800 wallpaper across the two monitors. Eventually, I may ask the more knowledgeable community members in the support for for any input and solution. So for now, I content myself with the single laptop display.

I use a combination of Plasmoids and Superkarambas, which works out really well for me. I am too selective for my own good. Apart from the common layout of the taskbar, I have replaced a couple of widgets (such as the Plasmoid Smooth-Tasks) and am running a home-brewed system monitor widget. I also use a combination of KDE

native 3D effects and Compiz. I must admit that transparencies are better on KDE 4.3.1 than in 3.5.10. And to top it all, I launch applications via Cairo-Dock using the Neon theme adding my own personal touch on the icons.
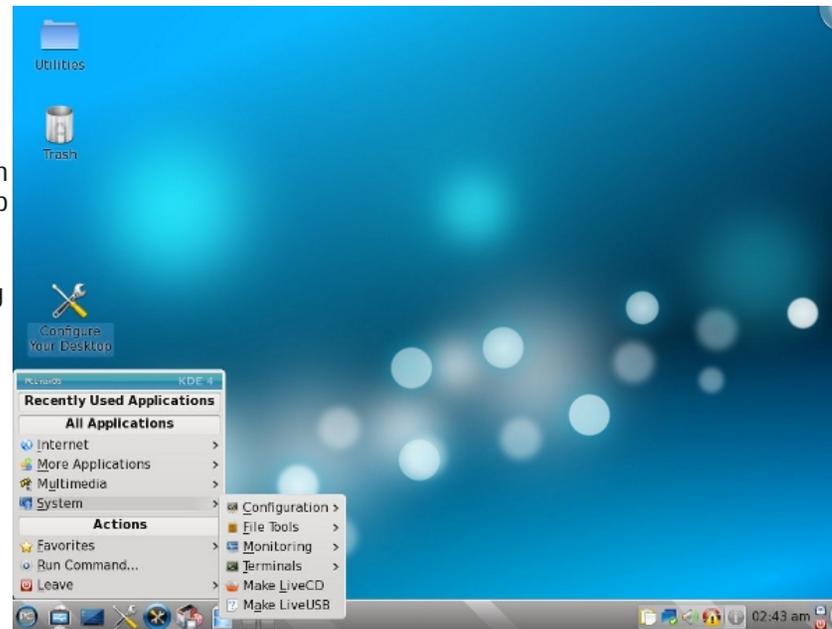
(like a KDE-native dictionary application, although I'm sure I still have to try out KDing), and better functionalities to Plasma.

One thing I am sure of though. I have ventured to the path of KDE 4.3.x and I know I will continue to use it. Will I still use KDE 3.5.10? If I have to, I won't mind spinning with an old friend.
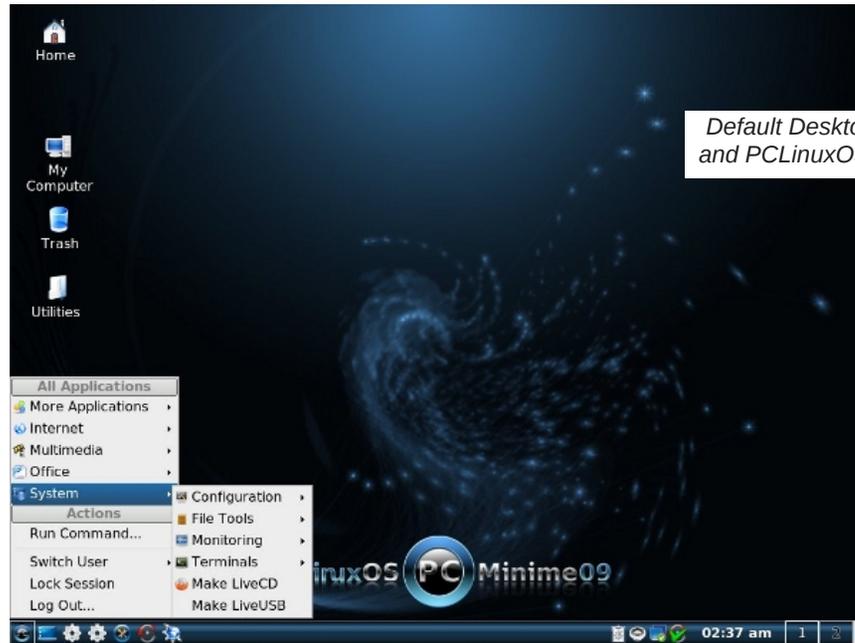
Default Desktops for MiniMe09 (left) and PCLinuxOS KDE 4.3.1 (top right)

So those were the few good things (and bad). On my wishlist are a fix to the Menu Editor that can't seem to run (D-bus related issues, possibly) and a few more applications I've been waiting to get packaged
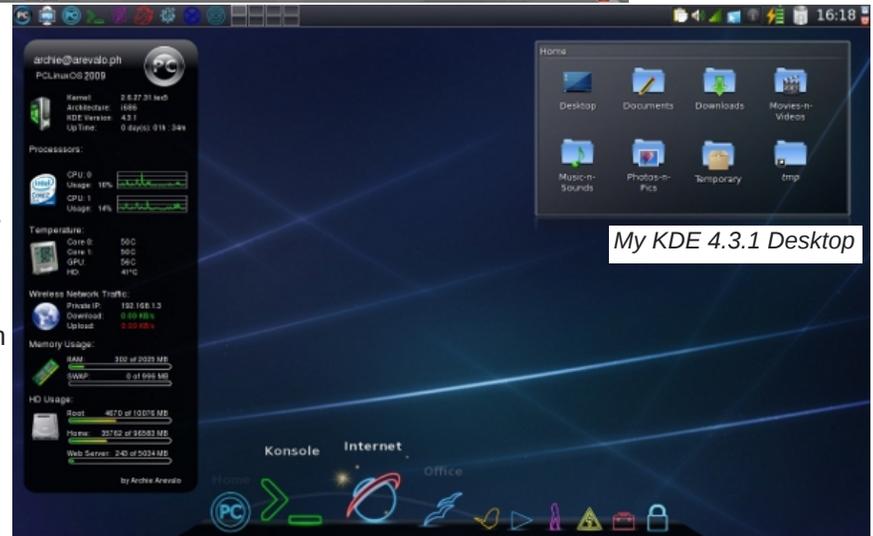
My KDE 4.3.1 Desktop

Top Seven Reasons to Choose PCLinuxOS over Windows7

by Patrick G Horneker

With Windows7 to be released on October 22nd, we really need to push the idea that consumers should choose PCLinuxOS over Windows7. Microsoft started its television advertising campaign using, of all things, a seven year old child as a spokesperson. The selling point in the ad was "I am a PC", and the words "more happy" were actually used in the advertisement to promote Windows7, as well as selected quotes supposedly from the major computer media companies, especially when ZDNet, not two weeks ago, said that the Linux desktop was ready for the mass market.

The screenshots from Andrew's article comparing Windows7 to KDE4 are solid evidence that much of the KDE4 desktop has become part of the Windows7 desktop.

With this in mind, I shall present the top seven reasons why consumers should replace Windows with PCLinuxOS, instead of upgrading to Windows7.

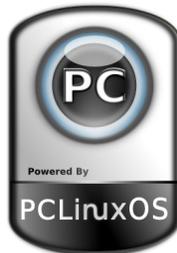**7**. Windows7 requires 1GB of RAM, with 2GB recommended for performance. PCLinuxOS requires 128MB for the MiniMe, LXDE, and some variants, while 256MB is the requirement for the KDE3 and GNOME variants of PCLinuxOS. 512MB is the minimum for the KDE4 desktop.

6. PCLinuxOS is like Windows7 - until it comes to viruses, trojan horses, spyware, malware, and other malicious software: Never had it, never will.

5. PCLinuxOS is available as an installable LiveCD that can also be booted from a USB flash drive, or a memory card for that matter. There is no live version (not even a demo) of Windows7 to try out.

4. PCLinuxOS is easy to install and administer. In fact, it is so easy, even the seven year old child who does the advertisements for Windows7 can administer PCLinuxOS.

3. Hewlett-Packard All-in-one devices work out of the box with PCLinuxOS. Even with Windows XP, extra software is needed to get these printers working.

2. Wireless networking is made easy with PCLinuxOS, especially if you have an Atheros chipset built into your laptop. Simply run drakroam and you are set for secure wireless freedom.

...and the number one reason for installing PCLinuxOS over Windows7:

1. Consumers will get the best desktop made by the best people on earth!
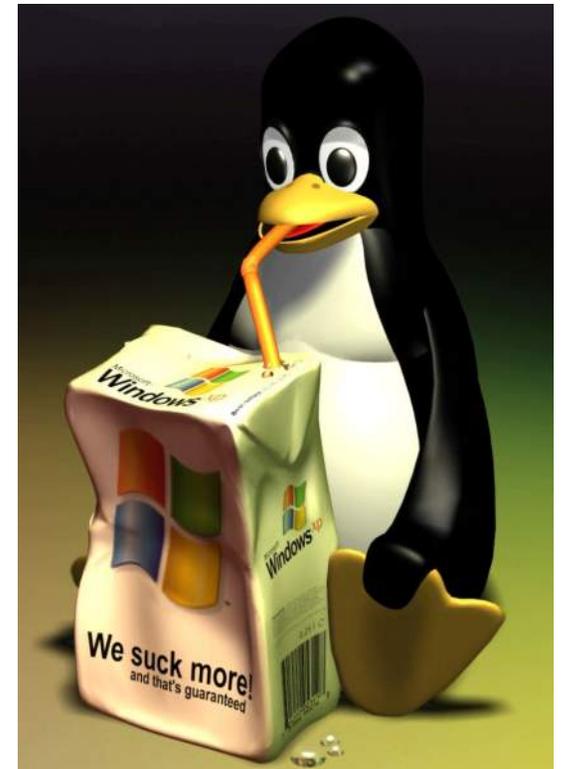
KDE Control Center's New Look

by Meemaw

With the change in KDE from version 3 to version 4, we've seen many changes. Some of us are hesitant to try the new KDE4, or have tried it and don't like it. Others (like me) have jumped in and not looked back. I was nervous about it, but as I find out where more of my configuration aids went, I like it more and more.

Obviously, changes have also been made in the KDE Control Center (commonly seen in the menu as "Configure Your Desktop"). Many of the items we are accustomed to seeing are still there, only rearranged a bit. I think that the old main menu with ten items was condensed into six items by combining them into some more meaningful section. Let's look:

Look & Feel

The first item in the list is 'Look & Feel' rather than 'Appearance & Themes', which was in KDE3. It actually is a combination of 'Appearance & Themes' and 'Desktop', so almost everything is in one spot. One exception is 'Themes' which is now in 'Folder View Settings' or 'Desktop Settings' (in the right-click menu on your desktop.) The other exception is 'Panels,' which was in 'Desktop' in KDE3. The panels are configured in KDE4 by right-clicking the panel and choosing 'Panel Settings.'
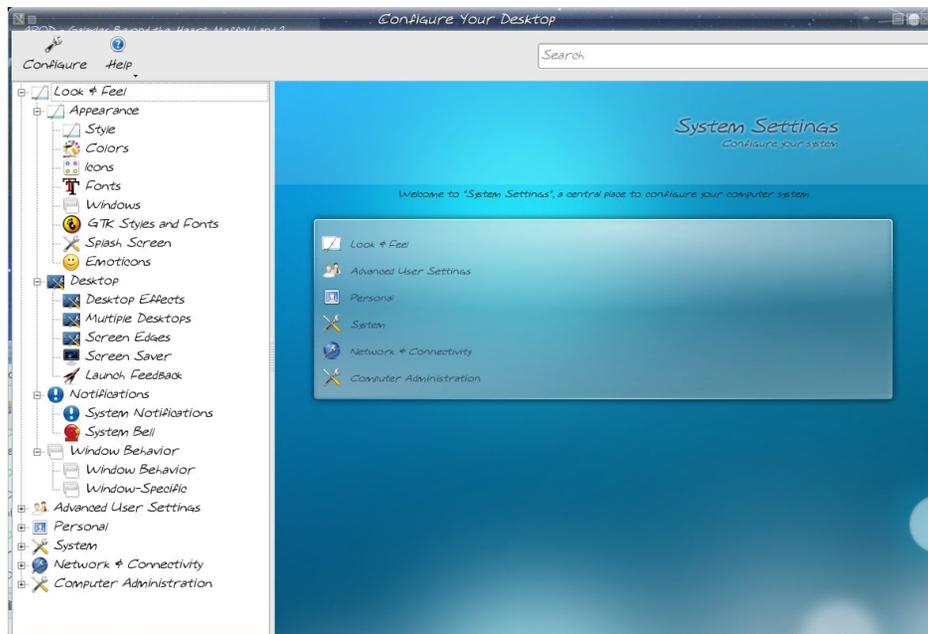
Under 'Look & Feel' are four sub-menus; 'Appearance', 'Desktop', 'Notifications' and 'Window Behavior'. Basically, anything you might do to configure how your computer screen looks or even sounds like is in this section. The Appearance section lets you change things like colors, fonts, icon sets and types of emoticons. In Desktop, you can enable desktop effects, configure multiple desktops, designate screen edge actions or configure your screen saver. Notifications lets you assign sounds to various events (like the revelie sound that K3b makes when the burn is finished successfully.) Window Behaviors can also be configured.

Advanced User Settings
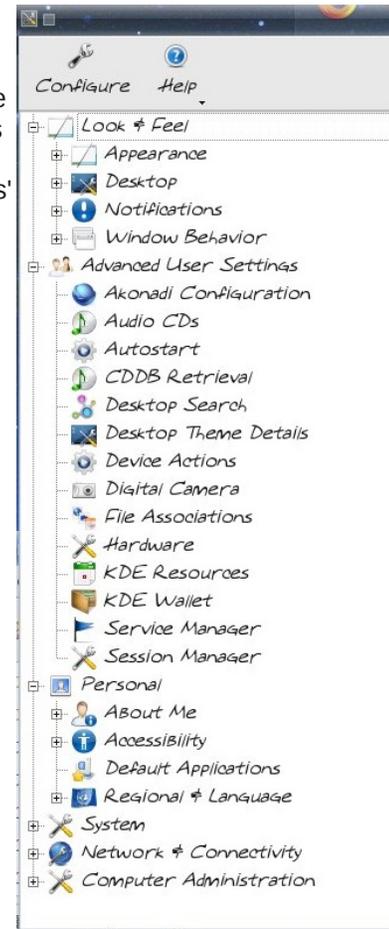
The next section is 'Advanced User Settings,' where you can configure things even more. The subsections include Akonadi, Audio CD's, Autostart, Desktop Search, Desktop Theme Details, Device Actions, File Associations, Hardware, Session Manager and KDE Wallet.

Akonadi is a newer KDE4 feature that is supposed to create a common link across your applications (like e-mail, calendar, instant messenger, etc.) which allows you to input information only once and it could be accessed in all apps (instead of having to put e-mail addresses into Thunderbird and again in Kontact.) It is not included in the 2010 beta.

Desktop Search uses Nepomuk which links data across apps so a search will bring up all relevant files no matter which program created them (and a tagged photo in one app will also tag it in another.) The goal is to link data across desktops so collaboration is possible.

Desktop Theme Details will allow you to configure your desktop even more... the subsections allow you to change individual aspects of your theme to suit yourself.

Device Actions lets you configure what you want to happen when you connect a new device to your computer.

Hardware contains configuration backends for HAL, Network Manager or Bluetooth.

KDE Wallet can be configured here, if you want to use it.

Session Manager lets you configure how KDE starts. If you leave a particular program running and the next day start the previous session, that program will be started as well.

Personal

The Personal section contains items to configure your install specifically for you.... user password and icon and what default folders are used for documents, pictures, etc.; accessibility issues and default applications. Here you also find Regional and Language, which will allow you to change your default language from English to your native language (if it is one of the many languages that PCLInuxOS is capable of using.) You can also configure how your system displays date, time, money, and so on. If your

keyboard layout is different from my US keyboard, you can change it here.

System

The next major section is System, which can configure some of the things that PCC does. You will be asked for your root password here as well. Login Manager lets you configure what login screen you see and which users are listed (you can choose not to have root listed if you wish.) Power Management is in this section, as is Samba configuration. Task Scheduler lets you schedule any task you want to be performed on a regular basis.

Network & Connectivity

You can configure proxy, some generic connection preferences (like timeout values) and service discovery here. Sharing with local folders is also configured here.

Computer Administration

Computer Administration includes configuring your date & time, your display (resolution, power control and designation of multiple monitors. The font installer is here, configuration of mouse and keyboard, device preferences for audio and video, and setup and

configuration if you have something that runs remotely using infrared.

We can do many things in KDE Control Center. Hopefully, its changes will make things easier to find, once we get used to them.

Enjoy!!
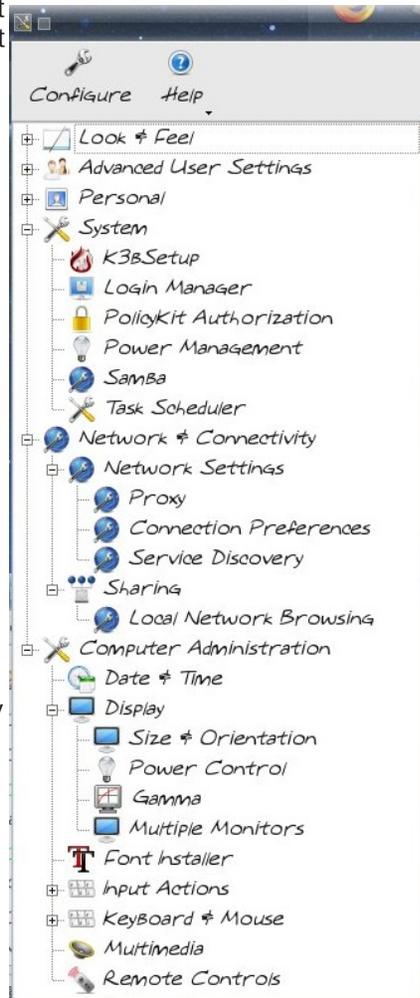
KDE 4: Dolphin or Konqueror?

by Meemaw

I recently made the switch to KDE4, and was greeted with a new file manager called Dolphin. While I have used Konqueror for almost four years, I decided I'd try Dolphin while still using Konqueror. I wanted to see just how much they differ, rather than just deciding there was something wrong with Dolphin, just because it didn't look exactly like Konqueror. After using them both for about three weeks, I've found that they are actually much more alike than one would think.

If you open Konqueror, then open Dolphin right next to it you should see basically the same thing.The arrangement of each window is pretty much like the other, and the default location that opens is your /home folder. Default in Dolphin is single-click to open a file, but you can change it if you wish. (If I remember correctly, it was that way in Konqueror as well, but I'm used to double-clicking, so I changed mine.)

at the bottom.) However, the two file managers can be configured to look almost exactly alike if you wish.
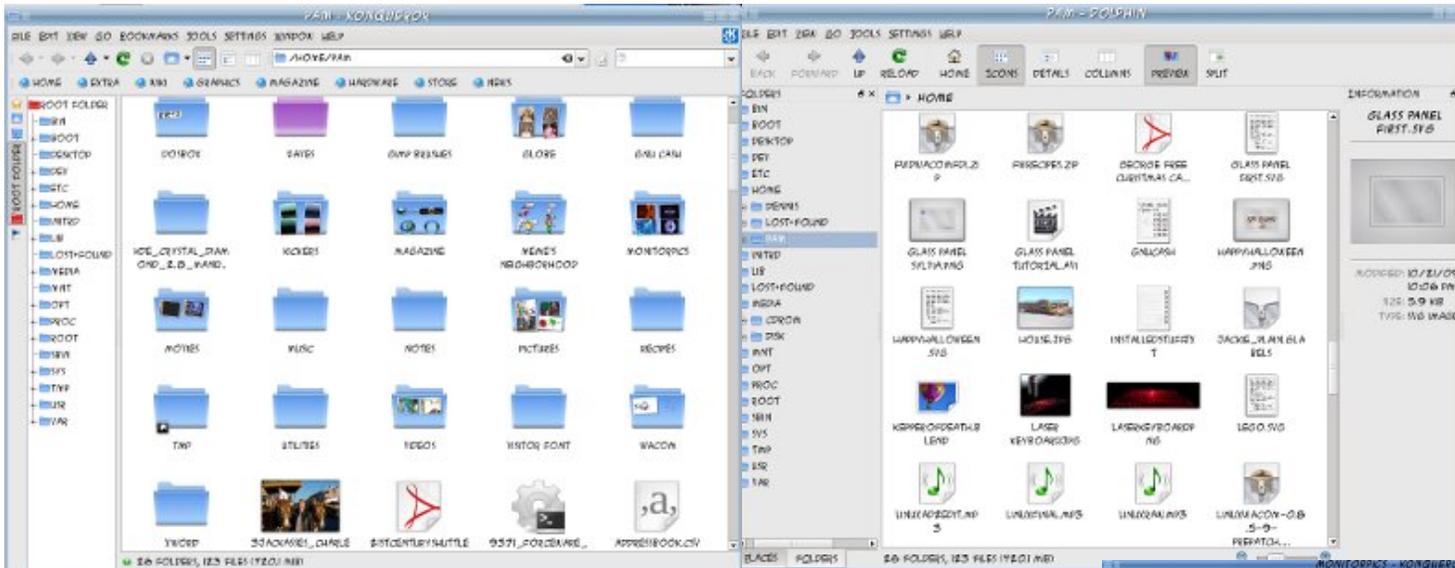
The **Location bar** is just a little different. In Konqueror, it is in the toolbar to the right of the buttons; in Dolphin it is a little more hidden, being just above the view window where your home folder is displayed.

You can do something in Dolphin's location bar that you can't in Konqueror. Say you are looking for something in /usr and have gone 'in' several folders. Now look at your location bar in Dolphin. It shows the path you are on (just like in Konqueror). However, maybe you think it's back up the tree in another folder, but you don't want to lose this location. Go to your location bar and click on the arrow to the right of the directory you think you want. You'll get a drop menu of the folders under the location bar, and you can see if the one you are looking for is there. (Notice the one you are in is in Boldface.)

So, now let's compare:

Konqueror	Dolphin
Places pane is narrow at left side of window	**Places** pane is larger at left side and can be toggled to view or not. It can also be moved to the right side of the window if you desire.
Folders pane is at left side of window	**Folders** pane is at left side of window, but can be moved to right.
File Information is generally seen by hovering the mouse over the file or right-clicking and choosing Properties	**File Information** is seen in the Information pane (if toggled on) as soon as the mouse pauses over the object.

In Dolphin, these three items can be toggled on and off in View > Panels, and can be placed at the left or right side of the window, or even stacked on top of each other with tabs for each one. I have Information on the right and Places and Folders on the left (tabs
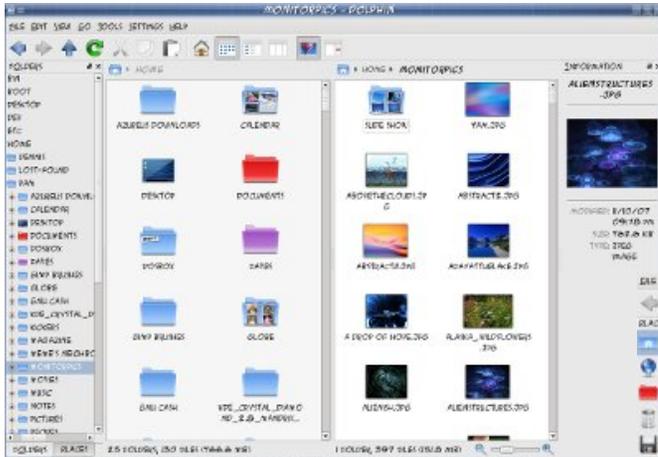
Split View is possible in both Konqueror and Dolphin. In Konqueror, it is under Window > Split View. In the default setup of Dolphin, there is a button on the toolbar.

Above - Back through the tree *Below - Split view*

Tools - The two main tools are 'Find File' and 'Open Terminal' and are present in both file managers. However, in Dolphin you can open a terminal within the Dolphin window as well. Simply go to View > Panels and choose Terminal.

Bookmarks: each program can use Bookmarks. There are three types - web bookmarks, places and application.

Web bookmarks are used by Konqueror when it is being used as a web browser.

Places (both applications use these) are usually only those places on your system you access regularly or want to remember - like the Places menu in System. You can right-click a folder in Dolphin, choose "Add to Places," and it will be added to the places menu. (I added my Magazine folder to Places.) --->

Application bookmarks can be accessed from any KDE application, if you wish. If you store all the photos you took on your trip in a single folder for use in Gwenview, for example, you can bookmark that folder. It is

then available in any other KDE program. You first have to enable bookmarks in one of the KDE programs.
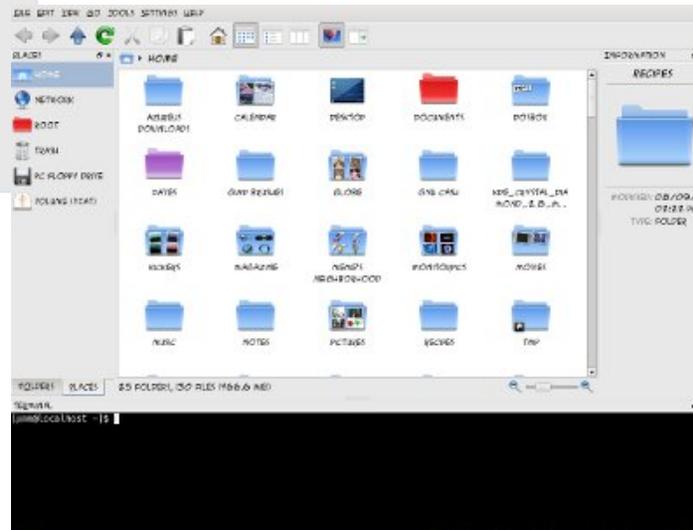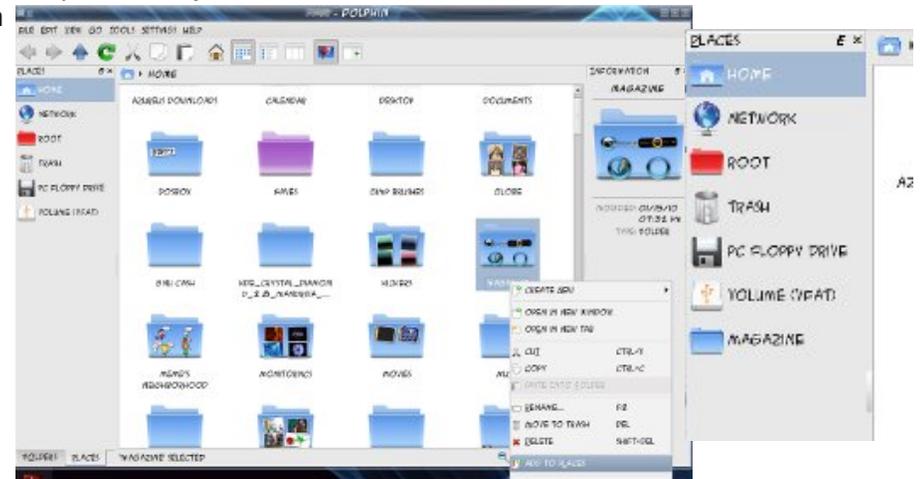
There are a couple of neat little features in Dolphin you might like. Hover your mouse over a file or folder... see that plus sign? It allows you to select that item. Now do it again with another item... you can select as many files or folders as you wish (in case you want to move some things around.) We've always selected multiple files by holding down CTRL and clicking away, but this method works too. If you select one by mistake, you can go back to it and click the minus sign that's there now and Dolphin will remove it from the selections.

Also, see that slider at the bottom of the window? You can change your icon size just by sliding the slider to the right. I like it because it's right there and I don't have to go into the menu at all (Lazy? Probably!!!)

There's much more, but this will get you started. I found that either of the file managers works equally well, plus there are a few extra things that Dolphin can do.

You can also visit
http://userbase.kde.org/Tutorials/File_Management#Discover_Dolphin
for KDE's Dolphin tutorial.
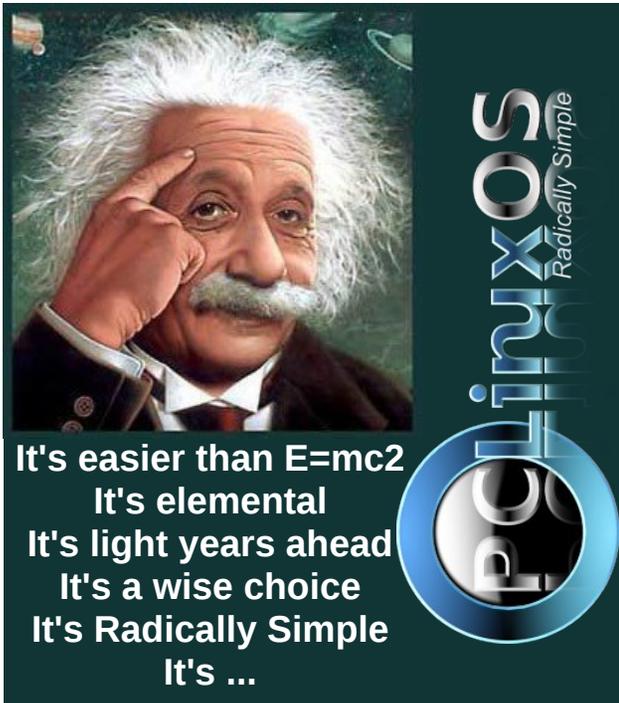
It's easier than E=mc2
It's elemental
It's light years ahead
It's a wise choice
It's Radically Simple
It's ...

PCLinuxOS
Radically Simple

Screenshot Showcase

Posted by Texstar on January 1, 2010 - using KDE4

PCLinuxOS
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KDE 4: A Brief Look at Configuring Dolphin

by Andrew Strick (Stricktoo)

In this article, I will take a very cursory look at tinkering with the settings in Dolphin, the default file browser for KDE 4. As a caveat, I do mean *cursory*. I will not be going into much depth because most of the options are quite straight forward, which makes explaining them more confusing than helpful. If you really want to get to know Dolphin, your best bet is to simply start playing around with various settings until you're satisfied with the result. So, with that in mind, let's get started!

The first thing that we'll need to do is open the Settings dialog. We can do this by clicking on **Settings > Configure Dolphin** in the menu bar.

This will open the Settings dialog, specifically the Start up tab, where you can modify the way Dolphin
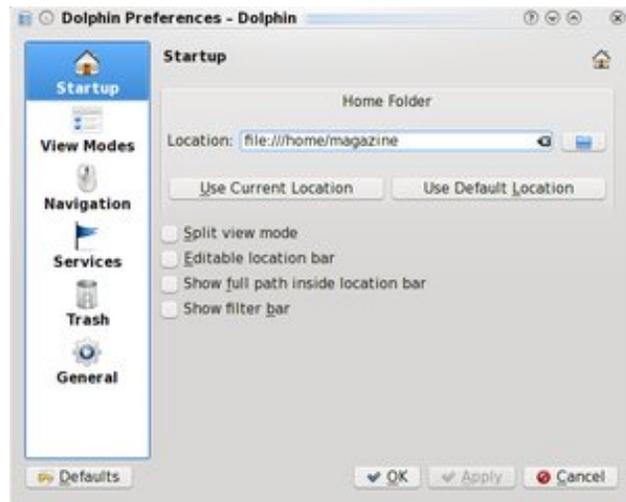
looks when first launched. By default, Dolphin displays your Home (/home/[username]) folder. This can be changed by editing the location displayed in the **Home Folder** text box.

If you check **Split View Mode**, Dolphin will launch with two panes displayed. **Editable Navigation Bar** switches the navigation bar from navigation mode to the more traditional browser-style textbox. **Show full path inside location bar** causes the navigation bar (in navigation mode) to display "/»Home»[username]" instead of simply "Home."

The next option, **View Modes**, is where you can tweak the way Dolphin displays your files. The settings for each viewing mode (Icon Mode, Column Mode, and Detail Mode) are on individual tabs. Each viewing mode has its own set of **Icon Size** sliders.
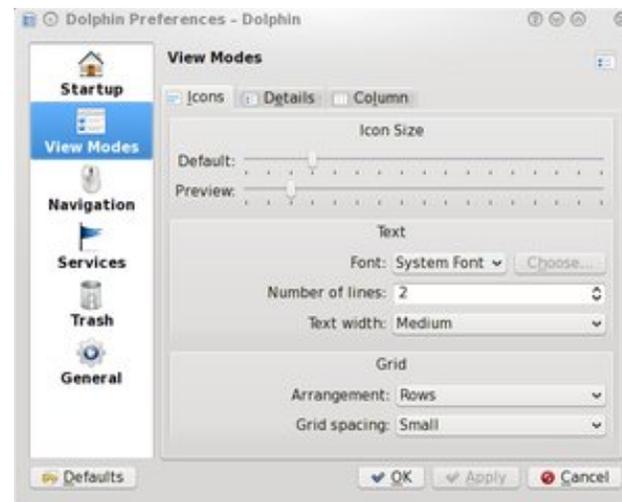
The first slider, **Default**, increases or decreases the size of normal Dolphin icons. The **Previews** slider has the same effect, but on previews. That is, you won't notice any change unless you toggle previews on via that **Previews** button on the main toolbar.
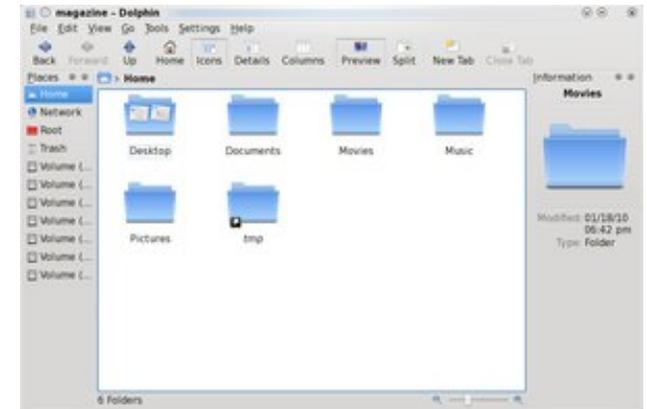
On the **Icon Mode** tab, the **Text** area contains allows you to select a specific font for icon names. **Number of lines** refers to the number of lines onto which icon names will break, if they are too long to fit in the text area. You can set the size of that area using the **Text width** option. In the **Grid** area, the arrangement setting gives you the option to have Dolphin display icons in columns instead of rows, and **Grid Spacing** controls the amount of space between icons.

The **Navigation** tab only has four options. The first two control allow you to toggle between single and double clicking to open files.

If you select **Open Archives as Folders**, clicking on an archive (files with extensions like ".tgz" or ".zip") will open that archive in Dolphin instead of Ark. As for **Open Folders During Drag Operations...** Well, I haven't been able to discover what exactly this option does.
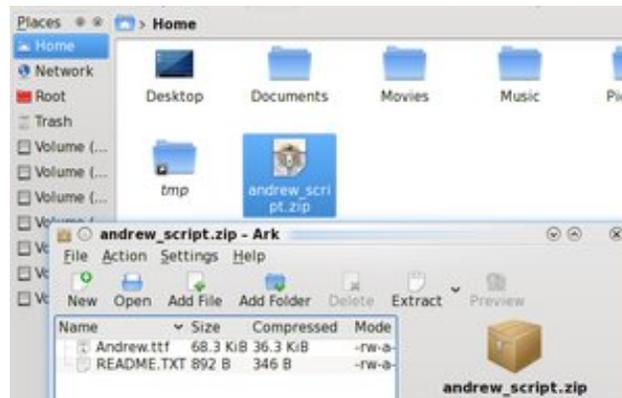
Next, the **Services** tab is essentially a list of every option that might appear in a context menu (e.g. Right Click » Open With). If you have unused options cluttering up your context menus, you can come here to deselect them. And no, Dolphin unfortunately does not (yet) have a method for adding options to this list.

The **Trash** tab contains options for controlling the size of your Trash folder. You can set Dolphin to automatically permanently delete files that are older than a specific number of days, as well as limit the size of your trash folder (as a percentage of your total /home partition size) and tell Dolphin what to do when you hit that limit.

And finally, there's the **General** tab, which contains a host of miscellaneous options. Most are clearly labled, so I won't muddle things by trying to to explain them, but there are two things that I would like to point out. First, the **Rename Inline** option under the **Behavior** tab is incredibly useful. If you enable it, file extensions will no longer be automatically selected when you rename them. This is probably seems fairly inconsequential, but it does come in handy when you are attempting to rename a large number of files at once, because you can simply type out the new name instead of having to

scroll to the beginning or end of the old name to avoid deleting the extension. Second, enabling a file type in the **Previews** tab will cause Dolphin to automatically enable Previews whenever you open a directory containing that type of file. For example, if you check "JPEG", whenever you open a folder that has JPEG images in it Dolphin will toggle Previews on (and the Preview button on the main toolbar will be depressed).

One last thing that I would like to do is explain the search function in Dolphin. If you right click on the main toolbar, or go to **Settings > Toolbars**, you can elect to display the Search toolbar next to the main toolbar.
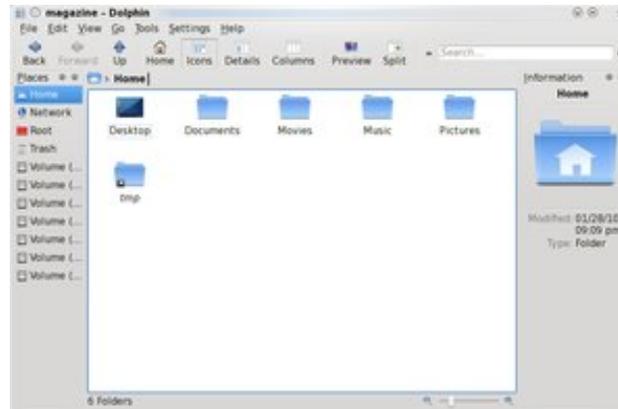
However, if you attempt to search for a file, you'll receive an error message telling you that nepomuksearch (the KDE 4 indexing service) failed.

This is because you first need to enable indexing. And to do this, you need to go to **Configure Your Desktop > Advanced User Settings > Desktop Search** and enable both Nepomuk and Strigi.

Once enabled, Nepomuk and Strigi will begin to index your home folder, and you will be able to use the search bar to locate files.

WARNING: indexing can take time. I would suggest going to the **Advanced Settings** tab and deselecting any directories that you do not need
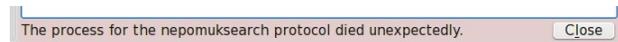
indexed, especially if they contain large numbers of image or video files. Also, you can pause indexing by right clicking on the Nepomuk icon in the system tray and clicking **Suspend Strigi Indexing**.
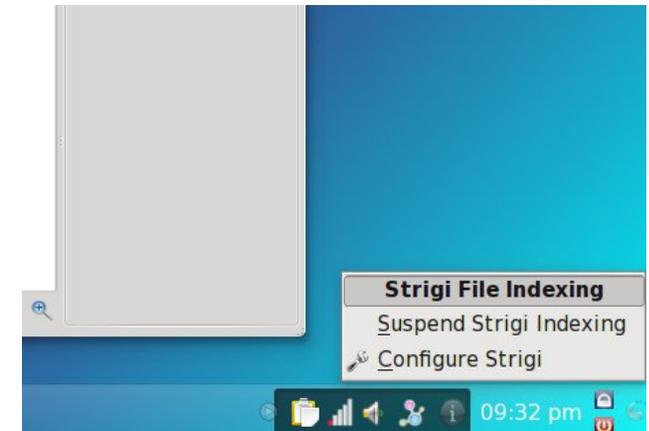
While this article was very brief, I hope that it helps to make the transition to Dolphin a little bit smoother. But if in the end you simply cannot get used to Dolphin, never fear: Konqueror can still be set as the default file browser in KDE 4. Simply right click on any folder, select "Properties" and click on the small wrench icon on the right side of the screen. This will open the file properties dialog for directories. Move Konqueror to the top of the list and hit "OK." It's just that simple.

(See images on next page).

Screenshot Showcase
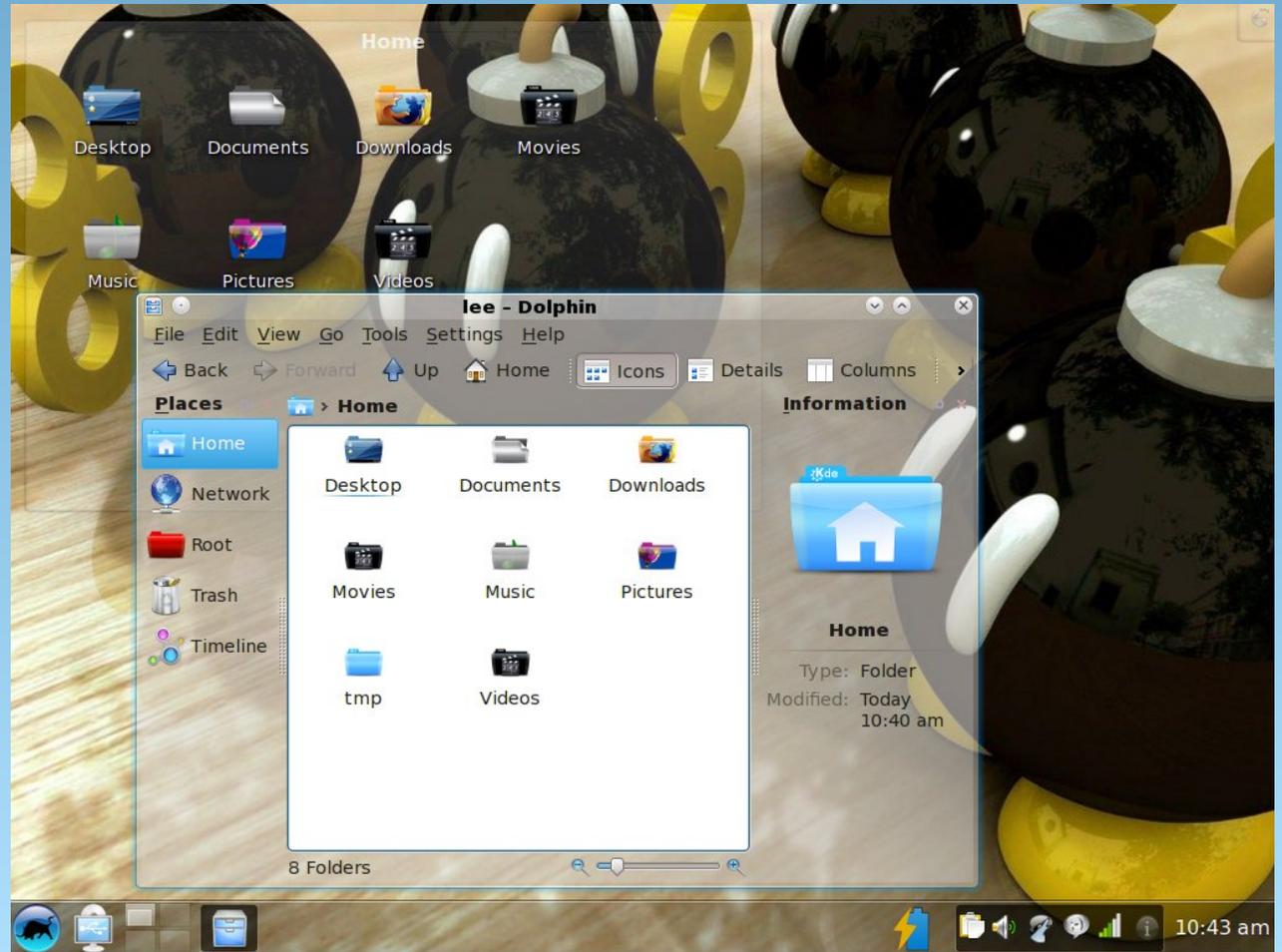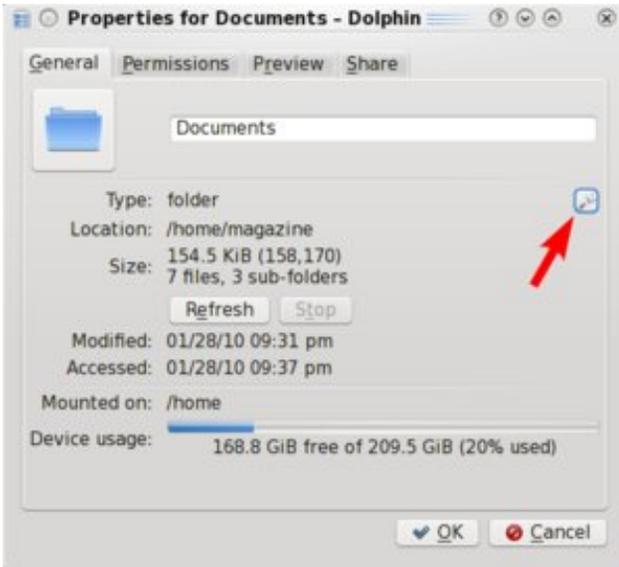
Posted by Lee2010 on July 14, 2010

by Paul Arnote (parnote)

Windows users call it the "taskbar." To Linux users, it's called the "panel." The panel has been around for a long time. Many of us are accustomed to how the panel worked under previous versions of KDE, such as KDE 3.5.x. Most of the functionality we had become used to in previous versions of KDE is still there, with some new features added in to improve functionality.

Under the previous versions of KDE, the panel was under control of a separate module that ran in the background and managed the panel. Under KDE 4, the panel is simply another widget/plasmoid running on the KDE 4 Plasma desktop. Since it is a widget, you must first unlock the widgets, by selecting the cashew in the upper right corner of the screen, and selecting "Unlock Widgets" from the cashew's menu that pops up. Alternatively, you can right click your mouse anywhere on the desktop, and select "Unlock Widgets" from there.

Once your desktop widgets are unlocked, you will then see the cashew on the panel, in the lower right corner of your screen (provided your panel occupies the default position, at the bottom of the screen).

Panel Tool Box
Click to access size, location and hiding controls as well as to add new widgets to the panel.

Clicking on the cashew on the panel (previous column, right lower corner) will reveal the more common settings for the panel widget, and allow you to change the way the panel is laid out.

Before we start changing things around, it's probably a good idea to learn where things are placed, by default.

Starting with the first one-third of the panel, the first item (from the left) is the KMenu, which as in previous versions of KDE, gives you access to the GUI versions of the programs installed on your system. The next seven icons represent launchers and other widgets installed on your copy of KDE 4. The first of those is the Device Notifier, which provides access to the various storage devices you may choose to use with your computer. These may be USB Flash Drives, USB External Hard Disk Drives, or even blank, recordable optical media. The next icon, from left to right, is the "Show Desktop" widget. Clicking on this will cause any and all open windows on your workspace to be minimized to the panel. The larger wrench and screwdriver icon represents "Configure Your Desktop" (previously known as KDE Control Center, or KCC), where you would go to make changes in the behavior of your desktop. The next icon, with the wrench and screwdriver in the blue circle, brings up PCLinuxOS Control Center, a.k.a. PCC, which is where you would go to configure various things related to your computer's configuration, and how PCLinuxOS runs. The box, CD and floppy disk icon launches Synaptic, for installing/removing items from your installation of PCLinuxOS. The "file cabinet" will launch the

Dolphin, the default file manager for KDE 4. The last icon launches Firefox, and is not there by default. I added it to the panel, since I use it so often.

Lastly, at the far right of the first one third of the panel, is the pager widget. This represents the various workspaces, or desktops, available on your installation of KDE 4.
The middle one third of the panel holds the icons of

your currently running programs. Here, I have Dolphin, Firefox and XChat running. The icons are arranged alphabetically on the panel, making it easier to find the program you want to switch to.
The last one third of the panel holds, first, the
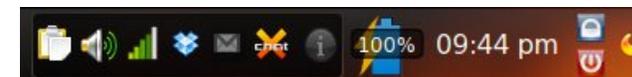
system notification area. This area is where you will find the Klipper Clipboard Tool, your KMix volume control, net applet notification of your network connection, and notifications from select other programs you may have running. Here, I have Dropbox, checkgmail and XChat running in the system notification area. The icon with the lower case "i" in it will inform you of system messages as they occur.

The next item in the last one third of the default panel is the battery monitor widget, so I can monitor the charge status of the battery in my laptop. To the right, is the clock display. To the right of the clock, is the Lock/Logout widget. The top (blue) button allows you to lock your screen, while the bottom (red)
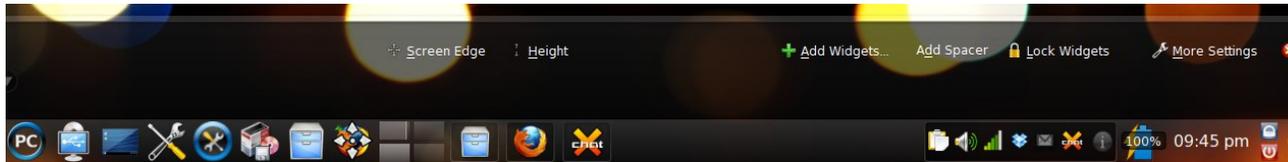
KDE 4 Panel Configuration Options

button provides all the options for shutting down your system, when selected. Finally, at the far right is the cashew that, when selected, will pop up the common configuration options for the panel widget.

The first configuration option (from the left) is which screen edge you want your panel displayed on. Simply click on "Screen Edge," and while holding down the mouse button, drag the panel to the screen edge you want it on.

Clicking on the "Height" button allows you to change the height of the panel. Just click on "Height" and drag your mouse (while still holding down the mouse button) to set the height of the panel.

If you would like to add some widgets to either the desktop or the panel, click on the "Add Widgets..." button. When you do, all the currently installed widgets will be listed in a horizontally-scrolling list, just above the panel. Double click your mouse on

the widget you would like to install, and that widget will be added to either your desktop or panel. You can close the "Add Widgets" bar by clicking on the x at top right. We'll talk more about widgets in greater detail in another article that deals only with widgets.

Back in the configuration bar, the "Add Spacer" button will add space between elements that are placed on the panel. The "Lock Widgets" button will lock the widgets to their current position, and not allow the addition or deletion of those widgets until widgets are (again) unlocked, as mentioned near the beginning of this article.

When you click on the "More Settings" button, you will get a pop-up menu. From this menu, you can tune the appearance of your panel. At the top of this menu, you can determine if the panel is aligned with the left or right side of your screen, or if it is centered between the left and right borders of the screen. You can also select the visibility options. This includes if

the panel is "Always visible," set to "Auto-hide," if "Windows can cover" the panel, or if "Windows go below" the panel. If you select the "Maximize Panel" option, then the panel will expand to fill the entire border that you have assigned to it. It is here, under the "More Settings" option, that you can also remove the particular panel that is associated with the "More Settings" menu item.

Fine Tuning The Appearance Of Your Panel

The things that we have covered so far involve the appearance of your panel as it exists on a full installation of PCLinuxOS 2010. There are other options available to help fine tune the appearance of your panel.

Not everyone cares to have the panel maximized to fill the border assigned to it. It is while you have the panel options activated that you can set the width of the panel. At the far left of the panel, just above the "PC" KMenu icon, is a down arrow. Clicking and dragging this arrow with your mouse will set where you want the edge of the panel to be. At the far right

KDE 4 Panel: Widget Dashboard
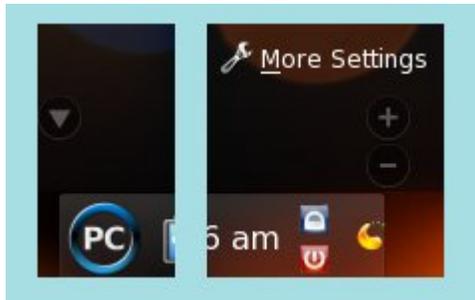
side of the panel, just above the cashew, you will see a "+" and a "-" sign. Click and drag the minus sign to set the minimum size of the panel, and click and drag the plus sign to set the maximum size of the panel. You can again quickly make the panel fill the entire border edge assigned to it, simply by selecting the "More Settings > Maximize Panel" option.

Just as everyone has differing views on how wide to make their panel, not everyone wants to have the panel arranged the same way. When the panel is unlocked and in the panel options mode of display, simply place your cursor over any item or element of the panel. You will see the cursor change to one with four opposing arrows. By clicking and dragging your mouse, the item under the cursor will be moved to whatever position you choose. Simply release the mouse button when you have the item placed where you want it. For example, we can place the "move"

cursor over the pager widget, and move it from its default position after the launchers, all the way to the right side of the panel, between the clock and Lock/Logout widgets.

As I mentioned earlier, the Firefox icon is not present, by default, on the panel. I added that, since I use Firefox so often, and since I want quick, easy, one-click access to launching Firefox when I need it. You can do this with any program icon that appears in your KMenu. Simply right-click your mouse on the item (as it appears in the KMenu), and select "Add To Panel" from the pop-up menu. This will place a launcher on your panel, although not necessarily where you might want it. If it isn't inserted where you want it (my Firefox icon initially was added next to the System Notification widget), simply use the previous instructions on how to move it where you want it. In my case (with the Firefox icon), I moved it to the right of the icon for Dolphin.

You can further tailor your panel's appearance to suit your tastes by going into "Configure Your Desktop" (a.k.a., KDE Control Center). Under "Look & Feel » Appearance » Style," go to the "Workspace" tab. From there, you can set the KDE style. The default style on the PCLinuxOS 2010 installation is "Glassified." You can also choose from "Air," "Air for netbooks" or "Oxygen." You can also download additional themes from http://www.kde-look.org, and

install them for your use. Just go to the Themes/Styles section, and be sure you are in the KDE 4 section.
There is yet another customization you can make.
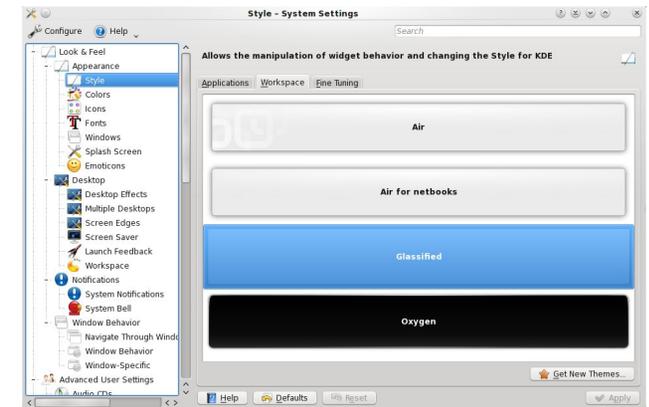
Although it isn't directly related to configuring your panel, it is worthy of including here. The default installation of PCLinuxOS 2010 comes with 4 multiple desktops (a.k.a "virtual desktops" and "workspaces") pre-configured. But some users want to have more workspaces. Some users are known to have as many as 20 (yes, twenty) workspaces. Some users are at the other end of that spectrum, and use only two. By going into "Configure Your Desktop," and moving to "Look & Feel," "Desktop" and "Multiple Desktops," you can select the number of desktops you want to have available to you, and displayed in the pager widget.

Some users like to have different wallpapers displayed on each different desktop. It is here where you can select to have a "Different activity for each desktop." Under Plasma in KDE 4, you apply "activities" to your desktop. The wallpaper is but one
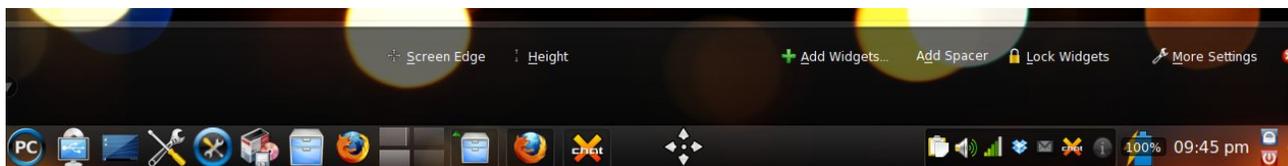
KDE 4 Panel: Moving objects with widgets unlocked. Note the 4-way cursor.
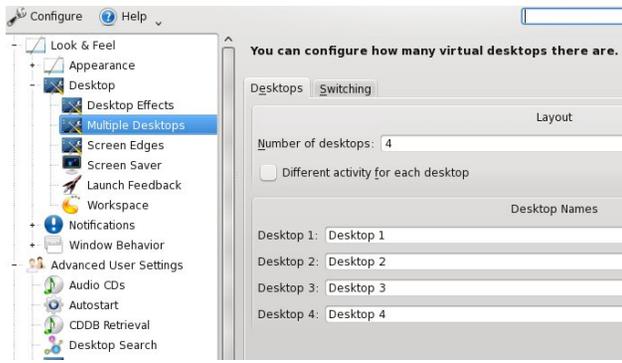
Conclusion

As you can see, there are quite a few configuration options for the new panel widget in KDE 4. Let your imagination run wild. Play with the configuration options, and come up with a custom panel configuration that's exclusive to you and best fits how you work and interact with KDE 4.

component of that activity. Other components include the various widgets. As such, by selecting to display a different activity for each desktop, each desktop activity becomes a stand-alone activity that is applied to the assigned desktop. This means that if there is a widget that you wish to be displayed on every desktop, and you have KDE 4 set to display a different activity on each desktop, you will have to re-add that widget to each desktop activity, and run that widget as many times as you have number of desktops. Currently, there is no way to separate the wallpaper from the desktop activity, and have a different wallpaper on each desktop, while running a common set of widgets across all desktops. Numerous pleas to the KDE 4 development team for this feature have gone mostly ignored.

It is also here, in "Configure Your Desktop," that you can (if you wish) assign names to your desktops. For example, instead of the default "Desktop 1," "Desktop 2," and so on, you may want to call your four default desktops "Earth, Wind, Fire, and Air," respectively.

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KDE 4: Introducing Plasma

by Paul Arnote (parnote)

By now, anyone who uses Linux has heard of the new KDE 4. The KDE developers no longer call "it" a desktop environment, or DE. Nope. Now, it's known as KDE SC, or *Software Compilation*.

One of the cornerstones of the new KDE 4 SC is *Plasma*. In fact, Plasma **is** your desktop. It's everything you see on your screen when you start up KDE 4. It's the panel(s), the desktop, application launcher – the whole she-bang.

Plasma is a whole new way of looking at the desktop. Sure, you can make it look like and have virtually the same functionality as the KDE 3.5.10 desktop. But then, you'd be missing out on some of the new features that Plasma delivers. So, let's take a look at Plasma, how it changes the desktop metaphor, and the things you can do with it.

At right is what a typical Plasma desktop looks like.

There are three principal components of a Plasma desktop. They are: the panel (often referred to as the "task bar," and defaults to the bottom of the screen), the desktop (the area occupied by the wallpaper and where any Plasma widgets are placed), and the Plasma toolbox (represented by the "cashew" in the upper right corner of the screen).

You use Plasma just as you would any other desktop on most any other computer operating system. You launch your programs from the KMenu, you view the currently active programs in the panel, access programs from the panel tray, etc. Much of that is

just as you have become accustomed to while running the previous versions of KDE.

An important part of Plasma is the widgets, also called *plasmoids*. Widgets are individual parts of the desktop metaphor. They can include, but are not

limited to, the panels, the clock, the system tray, icons and folders, weather forecasts, the trash can, photo slide shows – the sky is the limit, limited only by the imagination of the widget authors. In fact, panels and desktops are widgets, who's job it is to contain other widgets. In Plasma, these are called "*containments.*"

The key to using widgets is the Plasma toolbox, commonly referred to by many simply as the "cashew." From the cashew, you can add or delete widgets from your desktop or panels, lock the widgets, or several other functions. You will also find the cashew on some widgets, as well as some panels (like on your main panel, usually located at the far right side of the panel).

One thing you are likely to notice is that there are no icons placed on the desktop, as many users sometimes like to do. Rather, icons are placed in a container, called Folder View. One advantage is that you can have multiple Folder View widgets on your desktop, each pointing to a different directory on your computer. In this way, it makes it easier to organize your desktop, and to group your icons together.

Once on your desktop, widgets can be configured via the *widget handle*. The widget handle is displayed when you mouse over the widget, but only when widgets are unlocked, via the Plasma toolbox cashew. With the tools on the widget handle, you can resize the widget, set options for that widget, move it about your desktop, and delete that particular widget from your desktop.

Clicking your mouse on an empty part of the handle will allow you to drag the widget to the desired location on your desktop. By clicking on the first tool in the widget handle, you can resize the widget. The second tool will allow you to rotate the widget. Click this tool and rotate the widget to the desired angle. The third tool (the wrench) allows you to access the configuration parameters for that particular widget. The last, and bottom, tool allows you to remove the widget from your desktop.

As surprising as it may seem, not only widgets that are written specifically for Plasma can be used, but you can also use widgets created for Google Gadgets and Dashboard Widgets from Mac OS X. These may be installed from "Get Hot New Stuff," a KDE module scheduled to become a part of the KDE libraries (kdelibs).

Plasma also brings a new way to work with your desktops with something called *activities*. Activities allow you to define different widgets (and wallpapers) to each of your virtual desktops. There is, understandably, a limited amount of real estate on each of your different virtual desktops. As a result, you may not be able to place all the widgets you want to use on your desktop, without it appearing cluttered and crowded. By using activities, and defining different widgets for each desktop, you can maximize the placement and use of a greater number of widgets. You set these activities by clicking on the Plasma toolbox (cashew), and zooming out to display all of your desktops on one screen. Then, select "Use a different activity on each desktop." That is all you have to do to set up different activities for each desktop.

Say that during your "day job," you are working for a financial consulting firm. On your "off hours," you are writing the next bestselling novel. You also have a vast personal photo collection of your kids, grandchildren, and other significant members of your family. In your "free time," you are working to learn packaging. Now, with activities, you can devote each of your desktops to a particular activity. So, on Desktop 1 you have all of the files related to your job with the financial consulting firm. On Desktop 2, you have all of the files related to your creation of that next bestselling novel. You can place multiple picture frames and slide shows on Desktop 3, displaying your picture collection of those who are dear to you. And finally, on Desktop 4, you can have all of the files that are related to your efforts to learn packaging in yet other Folder View widgets. I think you should be able to catch on to the idea being put forth here.

Overall, the KDE developers have made great efforts to extend the usefulness and flexibility of the computer desktop. Do you have to use these new features? Certainly not. There is a setting in KDE 4 SC to change your desktop from one that utilizes Folder View, to the more traditional Desktop View that you have most likely become familiar with under KDE 3.5.10. But, under the Desktop View, you may lose, to varying degrees, the ability to utilize the newer features that Plasma brings to the KDE 4 SC desktop.

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KDE 4: Plasma FAQ

Editor's Note: With the impending change to KDE 4.x inevitable, especially since support for KDE 3.5.x officially ended October 31, 2009, there are bound to be lots of user questions concerning KDE 4.x, and the direction that the KDE developers have chosen for KDE 4 SC. This FAQ goes a long way in answering many of the questions that KDE 3.5.x users may have, and may help users making the transition adapt to those changes quicker. This FAQ covers up through KDE 4.3.x. KDE 4.4.x is due out this month, February, and should be applicable to it, as well. — Paul Arnote, PCLinuxOS Magazine Chief Editor.

General Questions

What does Plasma do?

Plasma is the desktop interface for KDE SC 4, including the application launcher (start menu), the desktop and the desktop panel (often referred to simply as the task bar). However Plasma is more than just this familiar collection of utilities, it is a common framework for creating integrated interfaces. It is flexible enough to provide interfaces for mobile devices, media centres and desktop computers; to support the traditional desktop metaphor as well as well as designs that haven't yet been imagined.

What is wrong with the current desktop technology?

Today's desktops are static. Typically they are tied to a folder in which one can find icons (application launchers), or user-placed documents and folders. Along with pictures and images as backgrounds, the current desktop doesn't go any further, or work for the user. Plasma takes a different approach, engaging the user by creating a dynamic and highly customizable environment.

I don't think it's such a good idea...

With Plasma, you can let your desktop (and accompanying support elements) act like it always did. You can have a task bar, a background image, shortcuts, etc. If you want to, however, you can use tools provided by Plasma to take your experience further, letting your desktop take shape based on what you want and need.

How does Plasma work?

Plasma's components are widgets called *Plasmoids*. Plasmoids can take on a variety of functions, ranging from displaying your desktop and associated wallpaper, showing your laptop's battery level, displaying your plugged in devices, and drawing the taskbar: basically, they are small applications that live on the desktop. Plasmoids can be grouped together in "containers" called containments. On a default desktop, there are two main elements: the Panel and the desktop itself. Both are containments in the Plasma sense.

It doesn't sound too new... other operating systems have done that.

The key difference here is that plasmoids can interact together. You want a better view of your laptop battery in order to find out when you are running low? You just drag it away from the taskbar and put it on the desktop. Also, applets can be resized and rotated at will, thanks to the use of Scalable Vector Graphics (SVGs). As you can see, the desktop not only interacts with you, as the user, but also with itself in new and interesting ways. You are now able to control how your workspace behaves and what it displays, in a visually pleasing and user-friendly manner.

Since Plasma is the sum of its plasmoids, every element, even the desktop itself, is a widget. This allows you to move your desktop anywhere with respect to the windows (back and forward). It is no longer rooted behind everything and becomes instead another element of real interaction.

Kicker and Kdesktop were working fine in KDE 3. Why did you have to change that?

Especially regarding kicker, there was the important issue of maintainability. The code was in place since the KDE 2 days, and it was difficult to add new features without breaking others. In the end, to proceed forward the only viable option was to start anew from scratch.

I can't find my favorite <insert feature here>!

Don't forget that the Plasma Desktop is still in heavy development and that KDE 3 was an extremely polished codebase: it took seven years to get to that, while Plasma is much younger. With time, the

Plasma developers plan on reintroducing features that are missing and fix regressions. As it progresses through the KDE SC 4.x cycle, Plasma will improve with it.

Why was the way the desktop operates changed?

The idea of a Desktop folder is fundamentally a broken concept. It assumes that everything you will access there resides on a single physical directory on your disk. It may be convenient, but at the same time it greatly limits what you can do. For example, you can't use custom layouts for different desktops, as everything would be read from the directory. Also, quite often a desktop structured like that becomes a dumping ground for files and folders, without any other function.

I heard there are no more icons on the desktop...

That is not entirely correct. You can have icons and launchers (shortcuts) by dragging them from Dolphin or the K-menu. What has changed is that the desktop will no longer display the contents of the Desktop folder. However, you can show an arbitrary number of folders (local or remote) on your desktop view, instead of being forced to display only the contents of the "Desktop" folder. To do so, the Folder View applet comes into play.

Also, should you wish, you can replicate the "icons on desktop" paradigm with minimal effort.

What is the Folder View applet?

The Folder View applet, like its name says, is used to display items (folders, files) from a directory. Such a directory can be either a local one residing on your computer, but also a remote FTP, SSH, or SMB share. In the future, it will even contain results from Nepomuk searches and tagging.

You can choose to view either all files, or filter either by specific regular expressions (e.g., all files with a certain extension) or by file type (for example, just images).

This applet also supports basic file management properties (moving, copying, cutting and pasting for example), and you can have as many as you want on your desktop.

Lastly, you can use one Folder View as the whole desktop, effectively replicating the "old style" paradigm.

What's the deal with Kickoff (the new K Menu) ?

During the development of KDE 4.0, different approaches for a K menu (application launcher) were tried. Some projects were ambitious but there was no way they could be completed on time. At the time, one developer ported SUSE Linux's application launcher (Kickoff) to the new KDE desktop architecture. As it was the most ready and feature complete (not to mention the product of usability testing) it was chosen to be the default menu. If you don't like it, the traditional K-menu is available as well - right-click onto the K Menu to find an option "traditional style". Also, some alternative menu systems have been announced and some, such as

Lancelot, are ready for daily usage and offer exciting new features.

What is KRunner?

KRunner is the versatile mini-command line you can activate by pushing "Alt-F2" or by selecting "Run Command" from the desktop contextual menu. It can search for applications, bookmarks, even sessions basing on your input, show system activity and even do simple arithmetic calculations.

KRunner's functionality can be extended through the use of plugins ("runners").

What are the "cashews"?

What is commonly referred as "cashew" is the Plasma logo you can find on the default desktop, on the upper right corner, and on the panel, on the right hand side (left hand side if you use a Right-To-Left language). By clicking on them, you can access other configuration options, such as panel configuration and the Zooming User Interface (ZUI). Some of these, like the panel cashew, only appear if the widgets aren't locked (see below).

Please provide an option to disable the upper right cashew.

Although putting an option to disable the cashew for desktops sounds reasonable, from a coding point of view it would introduce unnecessary complexity and would break the design. What has been suggested is, since the desktop itself (a containment) is handled by plugins, to write a plugin that would draw

the desktop without the cashew itself. As a matter of fact, some distributions ship already a "Desktop without cashew" plugin.

What is the Zooming User Interface (ZUI)?

The Zooming User Interface, or ZUI, is another component of Plasma. It enables the user to group different groups of plasmoids together, and to quickly switch between one and another using a zoom-and-pan approach. Notice that at the time, although significant improvements have been made, this feature is still under heavy development and may be fully functional only with later KDE SC 4.x releases.

How does the ZUI work?

Suppose you have three groups of plasmoids (such as widgets, application launchers, etc.) which you want arranged in specific combinations depending on what you want to do. You first group them according to your tastes, then you can switch between them by zooming out (getting a preview of all the groups) and then back in on the specific group you want to use. Notice that it is different from traditional X11 virtual desktop switching, as there is a higher degree of flexibility by using this approach, as the groups can be totally different from each other.

A very good example of this behavior is shown by this image courtesy of Half-Left from #kde on freenode.

That said, you can tie virtual desktops to ZUI activities.

Why can't I use the ZUI from Dashboard view?

That feature is a work-in-progress. We're looking into it, but can't yet say how and when it will be finished.

On multi screen setups, the ZUI operates on all screens, the Dashboard just on one. Why is that?

The workflows are different. When zooming out, the user wants to get an overview, therefore activities on all screens are zoomed out. Whereas when using the Dashboard, the user usually wants to access specific functionality and might not want to interrupt his or her workflow on other activities.

Configuration

Can I place icons on the desktop?

Of course you can. Dragging an icon from Dolphin or Konqueror to the desktop will work. Notice that dragging on the desktop will not actually create a file there, just a link to it.

To display the contents of your Desktop folder, or any other folder, use the Folder View applet.

Alternatively, right-click on an empty area of the desktop, select "Desktop Settings" and in the dialog that will pop up locate the "Desktop Activity" text. Click on the "type" combo box and select "Folder

View". Click OK and you will have a Folder View applet as desktop (showing the contents of the Desktop folder by default), like the "old style" paradigm.

> **TIP** If your widgets are locked, you must first unlock them, using the right-click menu.

I am using two screens, and I used to have kicker over the two displays. Can I do that with Plasma?

No. The reason is that having a panel over two displays adds a great deal of complexity, especially when the two displays have different resolution. As a result of this added complexity, this feature would not be guaranteed to work in all cases, hence it was not implemented.

Can I put the panel on only one screen?

All Plasma panels live in one screen. If you want panels on multiple screens, you can add panels and drag them to your preferred location using the panel controller you get when clicking on the Plasma icon in "Unlocked" mode.

How can I add applets to the panel?

Method 1: Open the Add Widgets dialog in the Plasma cashew (upper right corner of the screen) then select the widget of your liking and **drag it directly** (don't double click or use the Add Widget button) to the panel.

Method 2: Drag an applet from the desktop to the panel.

Method 3: Click on the cashew on the panel, and select "Add widgets". Once you have selected the applet, it will be automatically added to the panel.

Can I move the applets on the panel?

To do so, open up the panel controller (by clicking on the cashew or by right clicking on the panel and selecting "Panel Settings") and hover the mouse cursor over the applets. Its shape will turn into four arrows, and you'll be able to rearrange the applets as you wish.

Lydia Pintscher's blog has a video showing movement in action. Another one is available on Aikurn's blog. Aikurn has also made an annotated video.

How can I change the height and the size of the panel?

Click on the panel cashew (the small icon on the right side of the panel) to open the panel configuration interface. By clicking on "Screen Edge", you can position the panel on any of the edges of the screen. Clicking on height and dragging increases or decreases the size of the panel.

The arrows on the sides of the panel define its size: there are two, which define "minimum" and "maximum" sizes. The maximum size is the size at which the panel can expand when items are added, while the minimum size is the minimum size the

panel can have. If they are set differently, the panel will readjust its size depending on the contents.

Under "More Options" there are additional options to align the panel and configure its behavior.

Can I auto-hide the panel?

Open the panel controller, select "More Options", then click on the relevant option.

How can I remove a panel?

Click on the panel cashew, click on "More settings", then select "Remove this Panel". Alternatively you can right click on the panel itself, select "Panel options" and choose "Remove this Panel".

General Panel Configuration Help

This forum page gives an illustrated guide to configuring the panel.

I heard that you can use OS X's widgets with Plasma. Is this true?

Yes, Plasma can use OS X's widgets. Work has been done to implement also Javascript-based widgets (reverse engineered due to Apple's license).

How do I move, rotate or resize an applet on the desktop?

First of all, hover over the applet you want to resize. The applet handle will appear.

The applet handle takes care of resize, rotate and move.

* To move an applet: Click on the handle, then drag the applet around.

* To rotate an applet: Click on the curved arrow then drag to rotate

* To resize an applet: Click on the square icon and then drag to resize the applet. You can constrain the resize operation to the applet's aspect ratio by holding down the Ctrl key.

My widgets are hidden under the windows. How can I show them?

You can bring all the widgets to the front by pushing Ctrl-F12, which will bring the Plasma Dashboard to the front. When you are done, you can either push the Esc key or select the "Hide Dashboard" option from the cashew.

How can I lock the positions of the widgets?

Method 1: Right click on an empty area of the desktop and select "Lock Widgets" from the contextual menu. If you want to reverse that, right click again and select "Unlock Widgets". The same option is available if you right-click on the panel.

Method 2: Select "Lock Widgets" from the Plasma cashew on the upper right corner or from the panel controller.

How do I remove widgets?

If they're on the panel, right click on the widget and select "Remove this...". If the widgets are on the desktop, you have different options:

* If you hover over them, clicking the X on the applet handle will remove them;

* If you use the Add Widget dialog, you can click on the minus symbol icon next to the widget name to remove it.

How do I switch between Kickoff and the old style menu?

Right click on the menu icon and select "Switch to Classic Menu Style" (if using Kickoff) or "Switch to Kickoff Menu Style" (if using the classic menu). Alternatively, you can add either type of menu using the Add Applets dialog.

Aikurn has a video showing how to switch between the different styles.

How can I add/remove an activity?

Adding an activity: Zoom out from your current desktop view by clicking on the desktop view cashew (the icon in the top right corner) and selecting Zoom out. You see a toolbar under your current desktop. Click on "Add Activity" to create a new desktop view.

Removing an activity: Zoom out from your current desktop view and select the red cross from the toolbar that will appear to remove the activity.

Note: You must Unlock Widgets (Ctrl+L) before you can remove any activities.

KDE Forums user Fengshaun has made a screencast showing ZUI usage.

How can I quickly move between Activities?

The ZUI method is rather slow, so a better way is to use an Activity Bar. A short how-to here explains exactly what you need to do.

Are there any keyboard shortcuts for Plasma?

In addition to the mouse, there is a number of shortcuts available:

* Lock widgets: Ctrl-L

* Zoom out: Ctrl- -

* Zoom in: Ctrl- = or Ctrl-+

* Next applet: Ctrl-N

* Previous applet: Ctrl-P

* Add activity: Shift-Ctrl-A

* Next activity: Shift-Ctrl-N

* Previous activity: Shift-Ctrl-P

* Applet settings: Ctrl-S

* Remove applet: Ctrl-R

To change shortcuts, click on the desktop cashew and select "Shortcut settings".

How can I associate a keyboard shortcut with an applet?

Simply select an applet's settings (the wrench icon on the applet handle) and then click on "Kyeboard Shortcut". You will then be able to define a keyboard shortcut for your applet. Notice that some applets do not offer this feature (generally the ones that have no configuration).

Can the Dashboard show widgets other than those on my desktop?

Yes, it can. To configure it, click on the desktop cashew and zoom out. Choose "Configure Plasma" from the toolbox that it appears, and check the "Use a separate dashboard" option. Click on OK and you will have a different dashboard than your desktop when you access it.

How can I use virtual desktops as activities ?

Zoom out by clicking on the desktop cashew and a new toolbox will open. Click on "Configure Plasma" then check the box "Different activity for each virtual desktop". Click on OK and you are done.

Notifications take up too much screen - can I get rid of them?

For those who do not like it, there is a simple way to disable them. Right click on the system tray notification area (the "i" icon) and select "System Tray Settings".

There you will have the options of disabling notifications for applications or for jobs (such as file transfers) by unchecking the relevant check boxes.

Theming

I don't like the default look of the panel and other Plasma components. Can I change that?

Yes, the ability to change the look of Plasma was planned since the beginning. Plasma can use "themes", which are essentially a number of SVG images and files specifying the colors, to change its appearance. A number of themes are already available on kde-look.org.
How can I change my Plasma theme?

Right click on your current desktop, select "Desktop Settings" (alternatively, you can select the same option from the desktop cashew) and you will find the option under "Desktop Theme". You can also download new themes directly from there by clicking the "New Theme" button, using Get Hot New Stuff (GHNS).

Step by step instructions, although made for KDE 4.1, (including screenshots) are available on Aikurn's blog.

Is there support for advanced visual effects (transparency, etc.) without using compositing?

In an effort to keep the codebase clean of workarounds (if not even hacks), the Plasma developers have decided that features that require compositing to work will not have a composite-less version. The main reasoning is that in the past (KDE 3.5.x), such approaches were one of the causes of the unmaintainability of the code, and also because supporting those features is actually pushing graphics card developers to write better graphics drivers.

Troubleshooting

Plasma crashed, how can I bring my desktop back?

Normally Plasma automatically restarts in the event of a crash. If this doesn't happen, open KRunner by pushing Alt-F2 (it should be still running) and type "plasma-desktop". Plasma will be restarted.

My panel is gone, how do I get it back?

```
kquitapp plasma-desktop; rm
$KDEHOME/share/config/plasma-desktop-
appletsrc; plasma-desktop
```

This deletes your plasma settings, so you'll get the default configuration back. If running the 3 commands at once doesn't work, try typing them in manually and wait a few seconds before running the next command.

(Note that the $KDEHOME environment variable may not be set. Try ~/.kde (Fedora, Kubuntu Intrepid, Debian, upstream default) or ~/.kde4 (OpenSUSE, Kubuntu Hardy and several others).)

Some GTK+ applications show wrong system tray icon sizes.

That is unfortunately a problem in the Freedesktop.org system tray specification, which does not define the sizes for system tray icons properly.

I experience extreme slowness when using Plasma with the NVIDIA binary driver.

This is NVIDIA's fault entirely, due to their driver not supporting correctly the XRender X11 extension, and it also affects other parts of KDE SC such as Konsole. See this blog entry on how to report issues upstream to NVIDIA. This page contains a few suggestions on how to improve performance.

NVIDIA has released the 18x.xx series driver that can improve performance dramatically with the Plasma Desktop and KDE SC 4.x in general.

Users who have a NVIDIA 6 or 7 series card should add the following lines to their xorg.conf in the "Screen" section, which may improve performance.

You don't need to add these lines if you have a 8/9 or above series NVIDIA card, since they're enabled by default.

```
Option "PixmapCacheSize" "5000000"
Option "AllowSHMPixmaps" "0"
```

There are some other options you can try, which may improve things if you get poor Desktop Effects performance.

Go to SystemSettings»Desktop»Desktop Effects»Advanced, you will see "OpenGL Options", make sure "Bilinear" or "Nearest (fastest)" is set as the "Texture Filter" option. You can also try turning off "Use VSync" there as well.

Folder View and other plasmoids look badly rendered with an ATI video card and the open source radeon driver.

To work around this issue, you have to change the 2D acceleration method from XAA (X Acceleration Architecture) to the newer EXA. As this involves editing your xorg.conf file, bear in mind that such a modification may damage your system. Do it at your own risk.

To make the switch, edit your xorg.conf file (make a backup just in case) and locate the Device section for your graphics card. Add the line

```
Option "AccelMethod" "EXA"
```

before the "EndSection" line. If there is already a line with AccelMethod, change it from XAA to EXA. Save the file and restart the X server.

Notice that EXA is still marked as unstable, and that some other applications such as some KDE3 programs may render incorrectly.

Hints & Tips

Add an application launcher to the panel

If you use kickoff as your menu, right-click on the application icon, and select Add to Panel. If you use Lancelot simply drag the application onto the panel - you may need to hold it there for a second or so before letting go.

Add a launch menu to the panel

Lancelot makes this possible. Click on the menu launcher, then drag Applications as described above. When the popup menu appears, select 'Lancelot part'.

Various parts of the Lancelot menu can be dragged to the panel in this way. Read this description of how to use it.

'Favorites' may be a good choice for adding to the panel

Disabling ARGB visuals

For many of its effects, Plasma makes use of the so-called "ARGB visuals". For older video cards, this can mean a severe performance hit. To disable ARGB visuals and increase performance, you need to set the **KDE_SKIP_ARGB_VISUALS** environment variable to 1 **(KDE_SKIP_ARGB_VISUALS=1)** before Plasma starts. You can do so by putting a line setting this variable in /etc/profile or in ~/.profile. Right-click the panel when your task bar is full

To make some changes to the panel you need to right-click on it - and if you have open applications that may not be easy, The workaround for this problem is to use the panel cashew to bring up the panel settings, then you can right-click anywhere on the panel, including on application tabs, and the command will go to the panel, not the application.

Re-arrange the application tabs on your task bar

Right-click on an empty part of the task bar (or use the method described above) and select Task Manager Settings. In the 'Sorting' combo-box, select 'Manual'. 'OK' to close it. Now you can re-arrange your task icons by holding down Alt and dragging the tabs to their new order. (If you use this alt-drag while the panel config panel is open the whole group of application tabs will move as one.)

Watch some Screencasts

This forum page has links to screencasts that will help you understand Desktop Settings, Panel Settings and the Zooming User Interface (a.k.a. the Cashew).

Miscellaneous tips

Some alternatives for those who like a sparse desktop:

1 - you can remove the panel entirely. Open applications would be available using the ALT+TAB cycling.

2 - Remove the panel and add a short one at the top of the screen, to hold only the task manager

3 - Create a panel containing the task manager and use autohide.
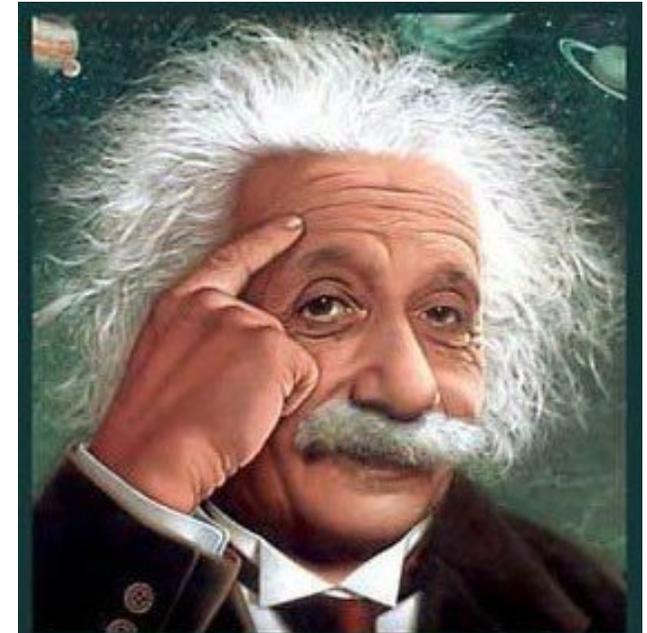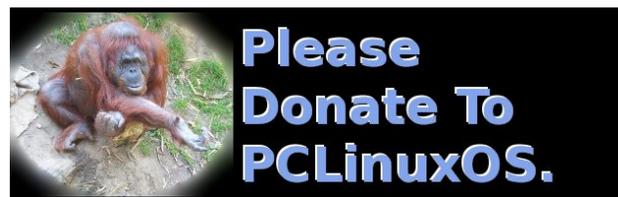
HowTo

A page of Screencasts to help understand Plasma

It's easier than $E=mc^2$
It's elemental
It's light years ahead
It's a wise choice
It's Radically Simple
It's ...

KDE 4: Widgets Galore

by Paul Arnote (parnote)

Under KDE 4, we've heard a lot about widgets, also known as plasmoids (but we'll stick with calling them widgets here, for clarity). The panel is a widget. The system notification area is a widget. The clock is a widget. The PC menu is a widget. The desktop pager is a widget. You can even display special widgets on your desktop, to help monitor the status of various aspects of your computer, to display weather forecasts, to display news feeds, to whimsically bounce a ball around your desktop or have "eyes" follow your mouse cursor around the screen. There are, literally, widgets galore in KDE 4.

Before you can add widgets to your desktop, you must first unlock the widgets on your desktop. You do this by selecting "Unlock Widgets" from the cashew's menu in the upper right corner of the screen, or from the pop-up context menu by right clicking on the desktop. Then click on the cashew at the far right of the panel, and select "Add Widgets." When you do, you will be presented with a selection of widgets that you can choose to add to your desktop.

There are a lot of widgets to choose from in the default installation of KDE 4 in PCLinuxOS. Here is an alphabetical list of those widgets, with a (very) brief explanation of what each does. The explanation comes from the widget itself, whenever possible. Widgets that are active in a default installation of PCLinuxOS 2010 are in red text.

Activity Bar: Tab bar to switch between activities.
Analog Clock: Displays a clock with hands.
Application Launcher: Launcher to start applications.
Application Launcher Menu: Traditional menu based application launcher (the "PC" menu).

Battery Monitor: See the power status of your battery.
Binary Clock: Time displayed in binary format.
Black Board: [the function of this is unclear, as it is not running properly]
Bouncy Ball: A bouncy ball for Plasma.
Bubblemon: A pretty bubble that monitors your system.

Calculator: Calculate simple sums.
Calendar: View and pick dates from the calendar.
Character Selector: View, select, and copy characters from a font collection.
Color Picker: Pick a color from the desktop.

Comic Strip: View comic strips from the internet.
Current Application Control: Controls for the active window.

Device Notifier: Notifications and access for new devices.
Dictionary: Look up the meaning of words and their translation into different languages.
Digital Clock: Time displayed in a digital format.

Eyes: XEyes clone.

Fifteen Puzzle: Put the pieces in order.
File Watcher: Watch for changes in specified files.
Folder View: Display the contents of folders. (User's /home folder displayed by default)
Fuzzy Clock: Time displayed in a less precise format.

Incoming Message: Notifications of new messages.

Keyboard: A virtual, on-screen keyboard.
KGet Bar Chart Applet: (no description available)
KGet Pie Chart Applet: (no description available)
Knowledge Base: Opendesktop Knowledge Base.
Konqueror Profiles: List and launch Konqueror profiles.
Konsole Profiles: List and launch Konsole profiles.
KTorrent: Plasmoid to keep track of a single torrent.

Lancelot Launcher: Launcher to start applications.
Lancelot Part: Parts of Lancelot menu on the desktop.
LCD Weather Station: Weather reports with an LCD display style.
Leave A Note: Leave notes for others while they are away.
Life: Conway's Game of Life applet.
Lock/Logout: Lock the screen or logout.
Luna: Display moon phases for your location.

Magnifique: A magnifying glass for the Plasma desktop.

Media Player: Widget that can play video and sound.
Microblogging: Update and view your microblog status.

News: Show notes from various sources (like the iluvpclinuxos Twitter feed!).
Notes: Desktop sticky notes.
Now Playing: Displays currently playing audio.

opendesktop - Common: Using the social desktop.
opendesktop Activities: Stay informed with the social desktop.

Pager: Switch between virtual desktops.
Pastebin: Paste text/images to a remote server.
Paste: Paste text snippets.
Picture Frame: Display our favorite pictures.

Qalculate: A powerful mathematical equation solver.
Quicklaunch: Launch your favorite applications.

Remember The Milk: Remember The Milk to-do list applet.
RSSNOW: Show news from various sources.

Search Box: Search box for a given Runner Manager.
Show Desktop: Show the Plasma desktop.
Show Widget Dashboard: Show the Plasma Widget Dashboard above other windows.
Smooth Tasks: Switch between running applications.
Spell Check: Fast spell checking.
System Load Viewer: Tiny CPU/RAM/Swap monitor.
System Monitor: System monitoring applet.
System Monitor - CPU: A CPU usage monitor.

System Monitor - Hard Disk: A hard disk usage monitor.
System Monitor - Hardware Info: Show hardware information.
System Monitor - Network: A network usage monitor.
System Monitor - RAM: A RAM usage monitor.
System Monitor - Temperature: A system temperature monitor.
System Tray: Access hidden applications minimized in the system tray.

Task Manager: Switch between running applications.
Timer: Countdown over a specified time period.
Trashcan: Access to deleted items.

Unit Converter: Plasmoid for converting units.

Weather Forecast: Displays weather information.
Web Browser: A simple web browser.
Web Slice: Show a part of a web page.
Window List: Plasmoid to show a list of opened windows.

yaWP: Yet Another Weather Plasmoid.

If you can't find the widget you are looking for in the default installation of KDE 4 in PCLinuxOS, or if you are wondering what's new in the world of widgets, you can download and install additional widgets from the KDE web site. Download the widget you want, and select "Install from local file..." from the menu that pops up when you click the "Get New Widgets" button along the top of the widget window that opens when you attempt to add new widgets. You will notice that you can choose between five different widget styles to install: Plasma, QEdje, Google

Gadgets, Mac OS-X Dashboard widgets, or Web Widgets. Just follow the prompts and select the file you downloaded. It is highly recommended that you save any widgets you download from the KDE site to a special folder in your /home directory, perhaps one named "widgets."

Or, you can just select the "Get New Widgets" button, and select "Download New Plasma Widgets" from the pop-up menu. When you do, you will get a window similar to the one below.
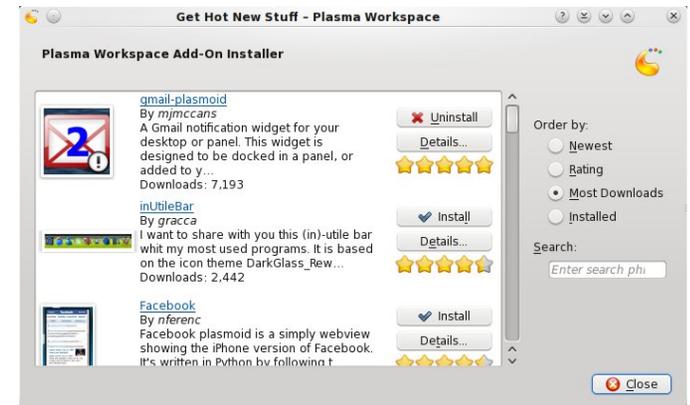
Once you find the widget you want to install in the list, simply click on the "Install" button to the right of the widget description. If you have already installed a particular widget, the button will change to "Uninstall" to allow you to uninstall that widget. Don't expect all widgets you find listed to work properly, however. In the screen shot, you will notice that the button to the right of the description for "gmail-plasmoid" says "Uninstall." This particular widget would never work for me on my PCLinuxOS 2010 Beta installation (neither Beta 1 or Beta 2).

Your third choice when you select the "Get New

Widgets" button is to "Install New Google Gadget." The KDE 4 Plasma desktop has been designed to easily incorporate Google Gadget widgets, along with all the ones created and shared on the KDE site. When you select "Install New Google Gadget" from the menu, you will get a window similar to the following screen shot.
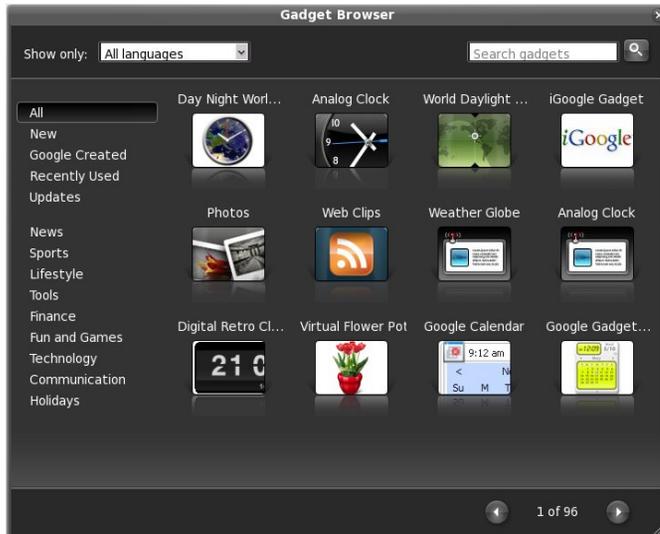
This will give you access to over 1,000 additional widgets, created for Google Gadgets. They work the same as the KDE widgets on your desktop. And, just as with the KDE widgets, don't be surprised if you occasionally encounter a widget that does not work as expected, or at all. Yet I do have to admit that I've had fewer issues with the Google Gadgets than the ones from KDE. Once installed, they generally run without any noticed problems. One problem that I did notice was that there were occasional plasma crashes on my computer when attempting to add Google Gadgets. However, much to the KDE 4

developers credit, plasma recovered and was fully functional after the crash. It's more like a "hiccup."

In this screen shot, you can see the four widgets that I have placed on my desktop. From top to bottom: System Monitor - Network, System Monitor - Temperature, yaWP, and News. All four are KDE widgets. In the "News" widget, I have the RSS feed from the "iluvpclinuxos" Twitter page.

As you can see, it's easy to customize your desktop experience with the addition of widgets in KDE 4. And, it's nice that the KDE development team embraced the other "widget platforms" that are currently available by allowing the use of those other widgets on your KDE 4 desktop. They are incorporated rather seamlessly, so that it's difficult to differentiate one platform from another. They just work, for the most part, with only a few hiccups here and there.

A magazine just isn't a magazine without articles to fill the pages.

If you have article ideas, or if you would like to contribute articles to the PCLinuxOS Magazine, send an email to:
pclinuxos.mag@gmail.com

We are interested in general articles about Linux, and (of course), articles specific to PCLinuxOS.

Reclaim Your Background: the Widget Dashboard

by Andrew Strick (Stricktoo)

Introduction

Plasmoids are one of my favorite KDE 4 features. I enjoy being able to see the weather and my system stats at a glance. It's helpful to have a notepad perpetually handy. And I especially love the Folder View plasmoid, because it allows me to keep multiple sets of files on my desktop while maintaining some semblance of organization. Unfortunately this all comes at a price; after a while there are too many plasmoids and too little desktop. Fortunately KDE 4 has a solution: the widget dashboard.

The dashboard can do two things. It can display all the plasmoids currently on the desktop over all open windows. That is, instead of minimizing every open window, you can see your plamoids simply by bringing up the dashboard. Alternatively, the dashboard can display a different set of plasmoids.

Fig 01. A very crowded desktop

Personally, I find this application more useful, because it allows me to use plasmoids while still maintaining a clean desktop.

Configuring the Dashboard

The settings for the Dashboard are found at:
Configure Your Desktop > Look & Feel > Desktop > Workspace.

Fig 02. The settings dialog
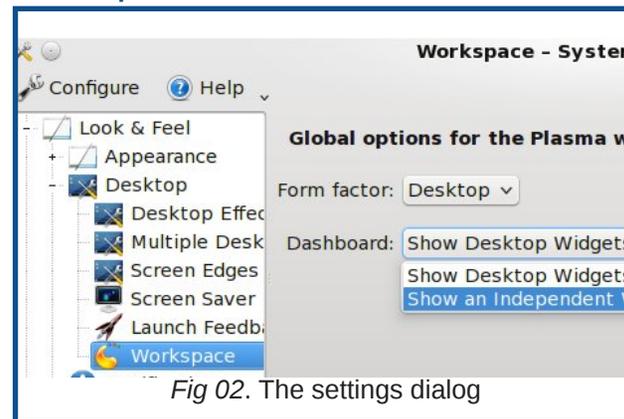
Unfortunately, the dashboard settings are currently pretty sparse. "Show Desktop Widgets" simply displays the plasmoids currently on your desktop (e.g. *Fig. 01*). "Show an independent Widget Set" allows the Dashboard to display a different set of plasmoids than those currently on the desktop (e.g. *Fig. 03*).

Moreover, there is no way (that I can find) to change the shortcut key from Ctrl+F12. However, "Show Desktop" can be assigned to a screen corner under **Configure Your Desktop > Look & Feel > Desktop > Screen Edges.**

The Dashboard can also have its own background.

Fig. 03. The Dashboard in overlay mode
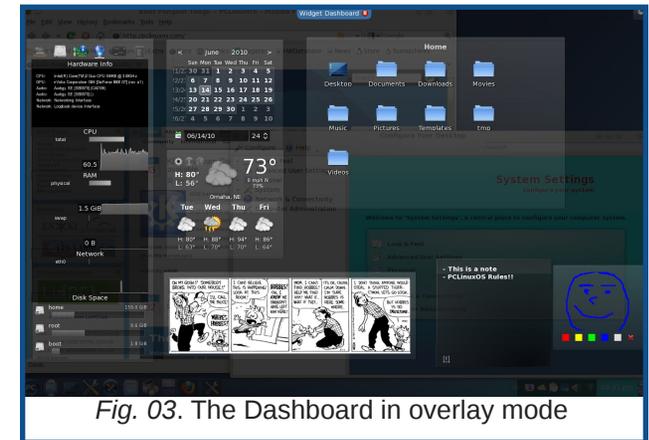
While the Dashboard is active, right click and select "Desktop Activity Settings" or "Folder View Activity Settings" from the context menu. From there you can choose a background image like you would for the regular desktop. However, if you have compositing turned on, the Dashboard background will be transparent and will not display an image.

Fig. 04. The Dashboard without a background
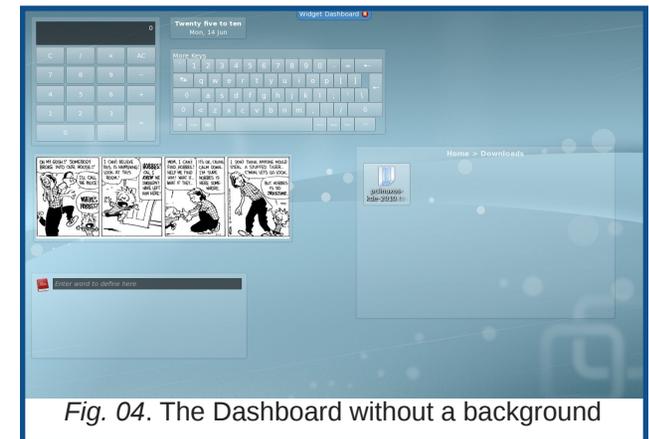
Using the Dashboard

Using the Dashboard is pretty simple. Simply hitting Ctrl+F12 will bring it up or close it. You can also close it using the Esc key or by clicking the close button on the top tab. To add plasmoids to the Dashboard, (if you are displaying an independent widget set), right click and chose "Add Widgets" from the context menu.

Quirks

In using the Dashboard, I've stumbled across a couple oddities. Neither are major, but they can cause some confusion.

Oftentimes initiating the configuration dialog for a plasmoid causes the dashboard to exit. This doesn't mean that any changes won't be effective; you'll just have to bring up the Dashboard (again) to see them.

Conversely, bringing up a dialog in another application does not always cause the Dashboard to exit. For example, suppose you save a .torrent file to your Downloads folder. You can add the torrent to Ktorrent by right clicking on it and choosing "Open With Ktorrent". This will bring up Ktorrent's "Add Torrent" dialog – but it will be under the Dashboard. However, the dialog will have gained the focus of keyboard actions, and the Esc key will close the dialog instead of closing the Dashboard.

Conclusion
I hope this short article helps you keep your desktop clean and clutter-free. Good tinkering

Fig. 05. The Ktorrent "Add Torrent" dialog box under the Dashboard
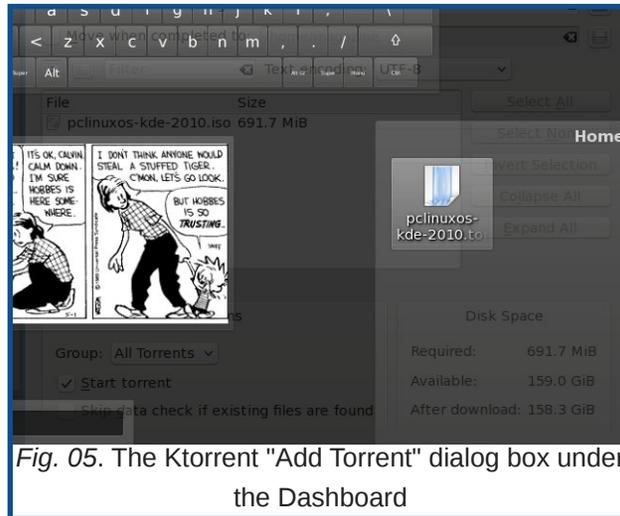
BONUS TIP

If you want to remove even more widgets from your desktop, try integrating some into the System Tray.

1. Unlock your widgets, then right click on a blank area of the System Tray and select "System Tray Settings".
2. Choose the "Plasma Widgets" tab (*Fig. 07*).
3. Place tick marks next to the widgets you would like displayed in your system tray.
4. Click "Apply".

I find this especially useful for my weather, Gmail Notifier and Device Manager widgets. I don't need them all of the time. In fact, I only want to see the Device Manager and Gmail Notifier when I plug in a device or receive an email. Placing them in the System Tray, a more natural setting, in my opinion, makes them accessible while saving precious screen real estate.

Fig. 06. The default System Tray

Fig. 07. The System Tray settings dialog, with the "Plasma Widgets" tab activated

Fig. 08. The System Tray with widgets

Come Join Us!
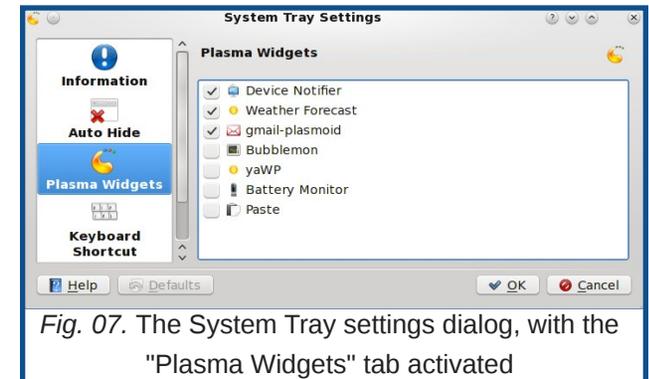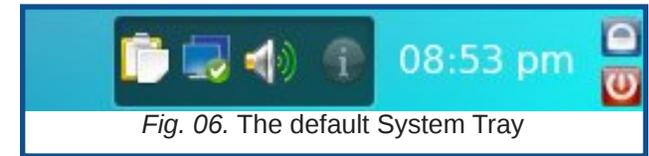
KDE 4: Krunner Grows Up

by Paul Arnote (parnote)

Of all the things that I have discovered in KDE 4 SC, Krunner represents perhaps the most understated change for KDE users, and cleverly cloaks its capabilities quite well in a very simple interface.


Under KDE 3.5.x, pressing Alt+F2 brought up Krunner (image above). The same thing happens in KDE 4 SC, but let's just say that it has **really** grown up, and now has a ton of new tricks up its sleeve. Sure, just as in KDE 3.5.x, typing in the name of a program you want to run will launch the specified program. But there is so much more that it can do, so hang on while we explore some of those added powers and abilities. It's kind of like Clark Kent – it appears to be meek and mild-mannered, but under that meek veneer lies powers untapped.

As seen in the image above, there isn't much to get excited about – at least initially. At the middle of the popup window is where you will type in the task you

are wanting to perform. And under KDE 3.5.x, this was the name of the program that you wanted to run. But there are more things left to explore here. Working from right to left, there is the "X". Clicking on that will close out the Krunner window. Next, is the "?" icon. Just as you might expect, clicking on it displays help for the various functions that Krunner is capable of performing in a popup area just below the current window.
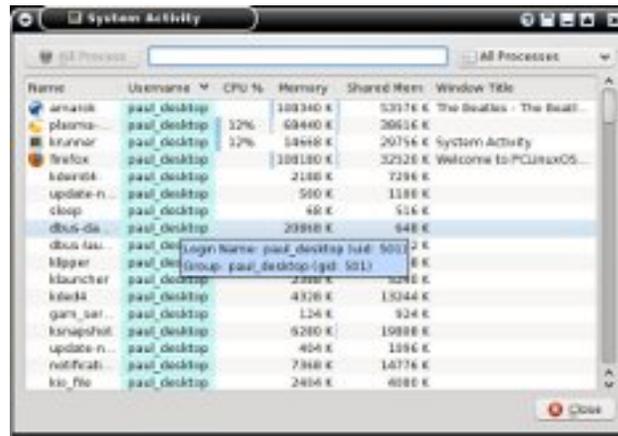
Clicking on the icon to the left of the entry box will bring up the System Activity window, where you can view all the active tasks currently running on your system. From here, you can highlight a running task, and click on the "Kill Process" button at the top left of the screen. This is helpful if you have a runaway process that's trying to bring your system to it's knees.

By clicking on the icon at the far left of the screen, you can specify which of the available plugins Krunner will use. Turn them off (or, un-check them), and Krunner will behave just like it's older and less

capable sibling in KDE 3.5.x. Turn them all on (or, check them), and you will be able to tap into the full potential of the new features that have been added to Krunner. Understandably, there may be instances (like on a network) where you may not want users to have access to certain things, and in that case, it makes perfect sense to limit that access by limiting the functionality of Krunner by deselecting those items you want to restrict access to.
So let's explore some of the new functionality that

has been added to Krunner. Starting with the basics, let's say I want to run a calculator program. I start typing in c - a - l into the text entry box in Krunner, and just as soon as I type in three letters, all the options where "cal" appears in the file names appears in the popup window below the text entry box. In my case, the options are "Run cal," "KCalc," "Local Network Browsing," "Add Locale," or "OpenOffice.org 3.1 Calc." Simply click on the one you want, or alternatively, hit the Tab key, and use the cursor arrow keys to select the item you want. Similarly, typing in the full text of "synaptic" brings up
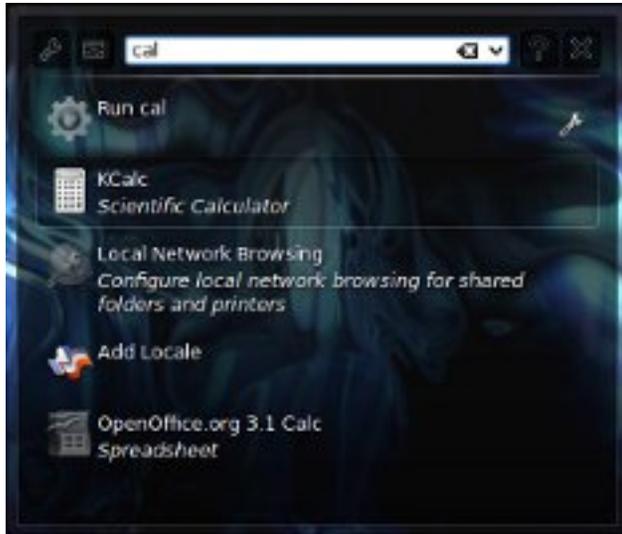
a list of everything I can do that involves the word "synaptic," as displayed in the screen capture below. It gives me the options "Run synaptic," "Synaptics TouchPad," "Synaptic Package Manager," and "Synaptic Repair Tool."
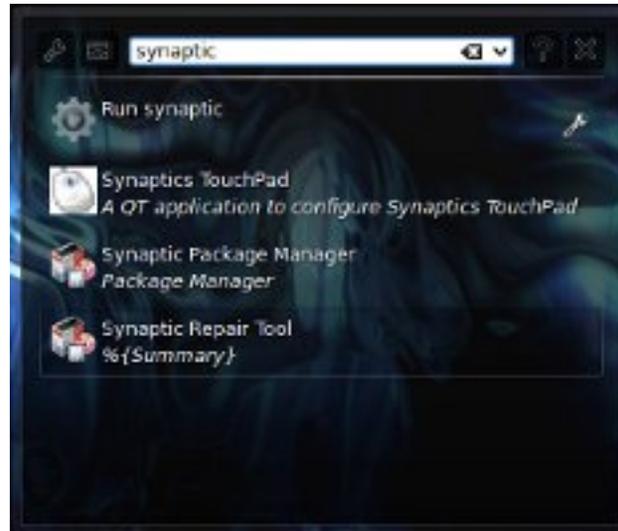
Krunner doesn't stop there. One of the plugins that is installed, and that you can select, is to use Krunner as an impromptu calculator, without having to launch a separate calculator application. Entering "=sqrt(2)" in the text entry box immediately displays the results in the popup window below, with 16 digits of precision after the decimal point. Similarly, you can put in much more complex math equations, using parenthesis, brackets, and braces to help you set the proper order of operations.

But wait! There's more! Krunner can also convert units of measure on the fly. If I type in my height in

inches, Krunner immediately displays my height in meters.
If I want another measurement other than meters, all I have to do is tell Krunner what unit of measure I

want it to use. In the example below, I tell Krunner to convert my height into centimeters, by entering "67.5 inches in cm" in the text entry box.
Similarly, if I type in "16 fluid ounces in m" Krunner will display *all* the possible measurement

equivalents in all the liquid units of measure that start with "m." If I do the same type of operation with linear measurements, Krunner will display all the possible measurement equivalents in all the linear measurements that start with "m." (I found out that I am just a bit more than 0.001 miles tall!)

I have only began to barely scrape the surface of all the new functionality that the KDE developers have built into the new Krunner in KDE 4 SC. For example, you can directly enter bash commands directly into the text edit box, and they will be executed, without you having to open a separate terminal window. Or simply enter a web address,
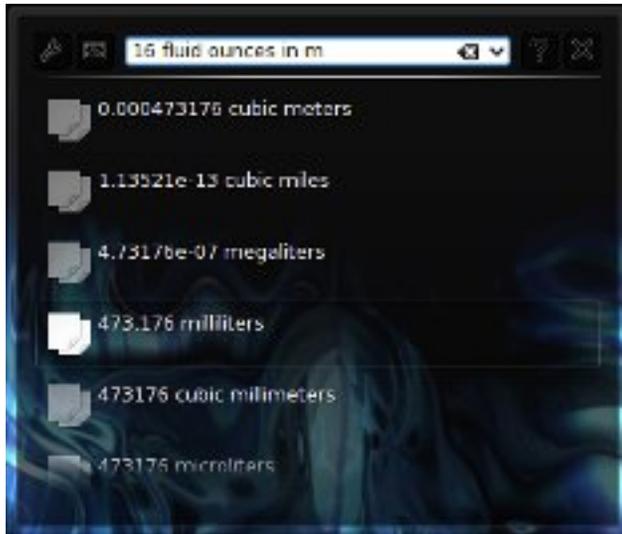
and the specified page will open in your default web browser. You owe it to yourself to further explore the other options. But, as you can see, Krunner has grown up and has developed some new "super powers" that are easily accessible to you, the user.

Screenshot Showcase
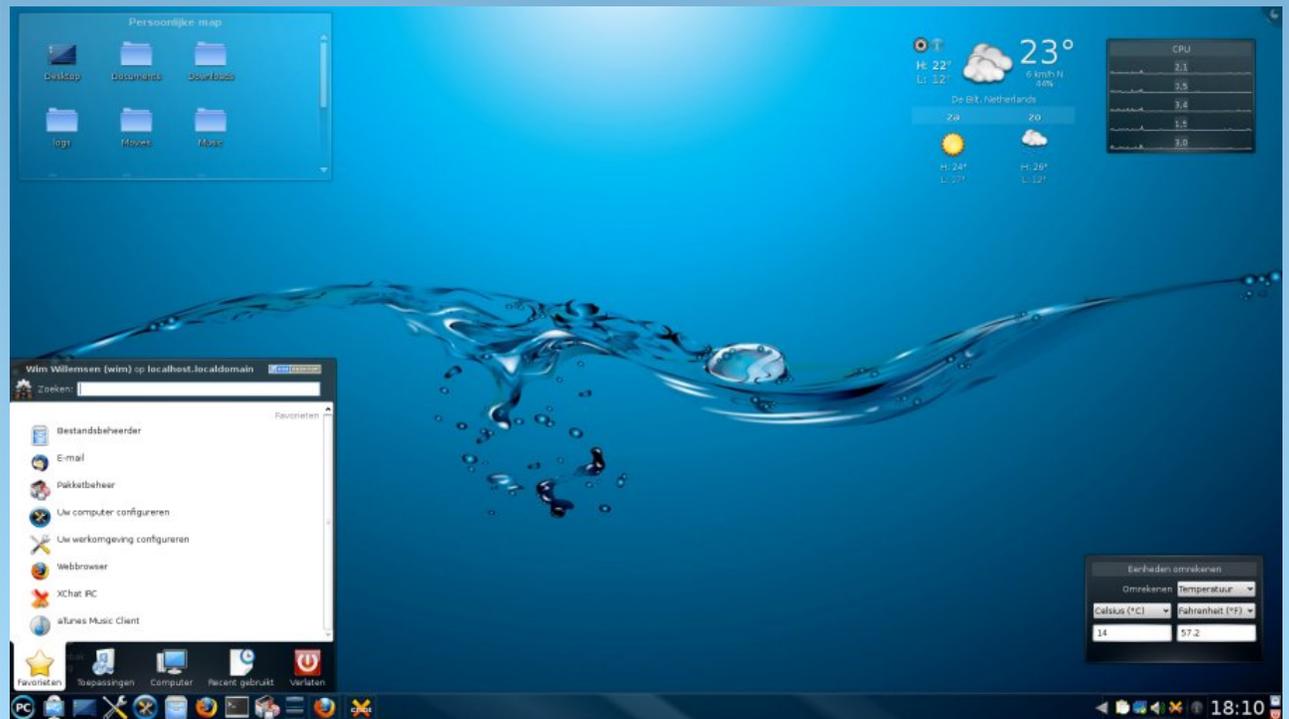
Posted by JohnW on June 4, 2010

KDE 4: The KDE Netbook Interface

by Andrew Huff (athaki)

The KDE SC Netbook interface has been well thought out and well implemented (with the exception of a few caveats; which I've listed at the end of the article.) In this article, I'll be showing you how to enable the Netbook UI (user interface) in PCLinuxOS 2010 and will show off some of its features.

To get started, all you have to do is click on the 'System Settings' button at the bottom of your taskbar. (It looks like an X made by a wrench and screwdriver).

We'll then need to click on the desktop icon (highlighted in the picture above). This will bring up another menu.

In this menu we want to go to the area labeled 'Workspace'. To get to the Netbook UI, all one has to do is switch the 'Form Factor' to netbook and click apply.
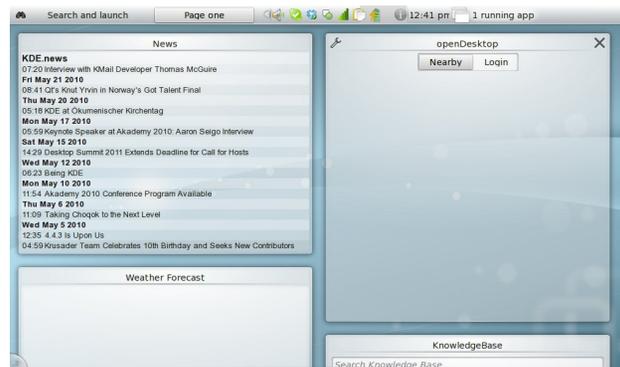
The preceding screen is what will greet you once the workspace has been changed. This is called the 'Newspaper' and this is where all of your widgets will now reside. The default widgets loaded are the openDesktop widget which is a social-networking/file-sharing site for open-source software users, the KnowledgeBase widget (which is part of openDesktop), News (which is an RSS feed widget defaulted to KDE news), and Weather.

To launch a program, click 'search and launch'. This will bring up another screen.

From here you have two ways to navigate: clicking an icon or typing in the name of a program. When you start to type a name of a program, the computer will guess the program to which you are referring.

When you do launch an application, it will open full screen with no visible toolbar. The toolbar is set to automatically hide. Just move your mouse to the top of the screen and it will reappear.
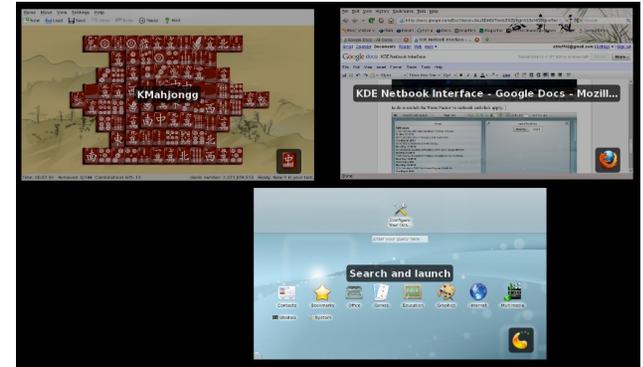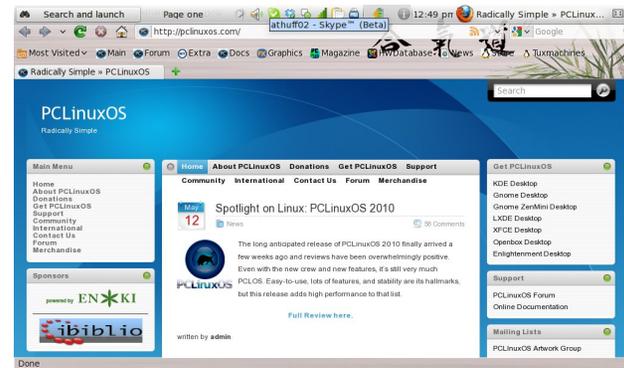
You also might have noticed a menu option called 'bookmarks'. Initially it is empty, but you can add bookmarks quite easily to programs you access often. To do so, just hover your mouse over a program icon and then click the yellow star in the top left corner.

With compositing turned off, you'll get a simple menu bar underneath the title of the current window.

The toolbar is also how you are able to close windows and move between windows. The X at the top right corner of the toolbar will close your window and the rectangle next to that will switch the window between maximized and windowed mode. When you click on the name or icon of the chosen window, all of your currently open windows will pop up in a new screen.

If you're like me and like to change around the default wallpaper, the folks at KDE have made it quite simple; just right-click on the 'Newspaper' screen and/or the 'Search and launch' screen and then click configure.
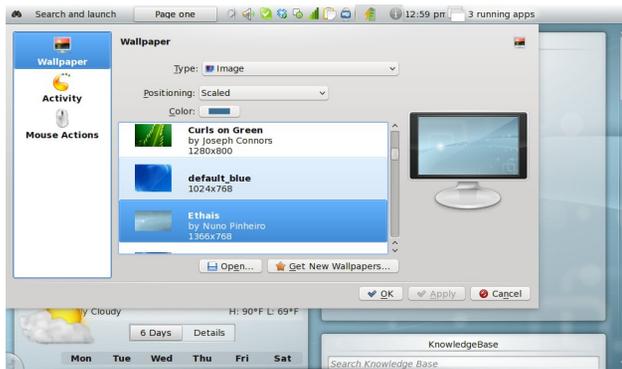
newspaper activity and will crash the Netbook UI (sometimes as often as every 15 minutes). When you change the newspaper activity to a folder view activity or a desktop activity, you can no longer add widgets as the add widgets button makes an effort to load and then fails. The Netbook UI seems to be the most stable when using the default widgets provided or not using any widgets at all. This is disappointing; especially given that the main screen is dedicated to showing your widgets.

PCLinuxOS Enlightenment e17 ISO
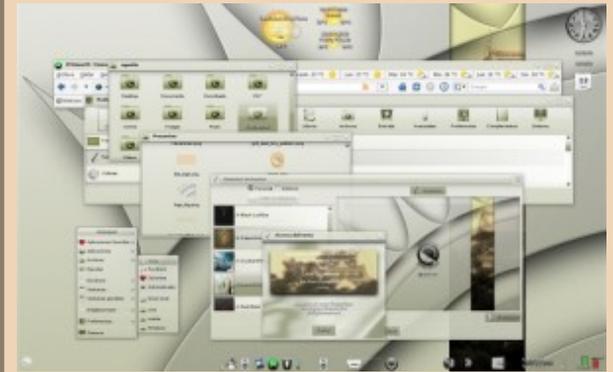
To get out of netbook mode, just repeat the steps that you made to get into netbook mode; go into system settings, which is at the top of the search and launch screen, and then go into desktop, then workspace, then change it from netbook to desktop and click apply. You'll be back to your old desktop in no time.

There are some caveats, however, within the Netbook UI. Some widgets will not work or will behave erratically when placed within the

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Join us on our **Google Group mailing list.**

by Paul Arnote (parnote)

One of the newest features of KDE 4 (compared to KDE 3.5.10) is the window compositing that is built into KWin. Before, it was the relegated to the realm of those who took the time to learn and use Compiz Fusion. But now, window compositing is easily within reach of most users. In KDE 4, it's referred to as "Desktop Effects." Veteran Compiz users will most likely view the KDE 4 Desktop Effects as "child's play," but for the rest of us, they represent some very nice effects that help break the monotony of what we've become accustomed to on our desktops.

Before getting started with explaining how the new KDE 4 Desktop Effects works, you should make sure that your computer's graphic card is up to the task. While official hardware requirements are exceptionally difficult to find (if they even exist), user reports indicate that you will need a minimum of 64 MB of video RAM to successfully run the Desktop Effects feature of KDE 4. Reports abound from users attempting to run Desktop Effects with 32 MB of video RAM and less. Additionally, your video card must support the OpenGL 3D graphics standard. Without both, you risk locking up your computer, and the only way to regain control is to do a hard reboot (a sometimes dangerous proposition). I can attest to the lock ups, as I just had to try Desktop Effects on my old Pentium 3 with only 8 MB of video memory on a GPU not capable of OpenGL. (Hey! I had to try!)

To get started setting up Desktop Effects in KDE 4, go into the KDE Control Center (KCC ... also named "Configure Your Desktop"), and select Look & Feel » Desktop » Desktop Effects.
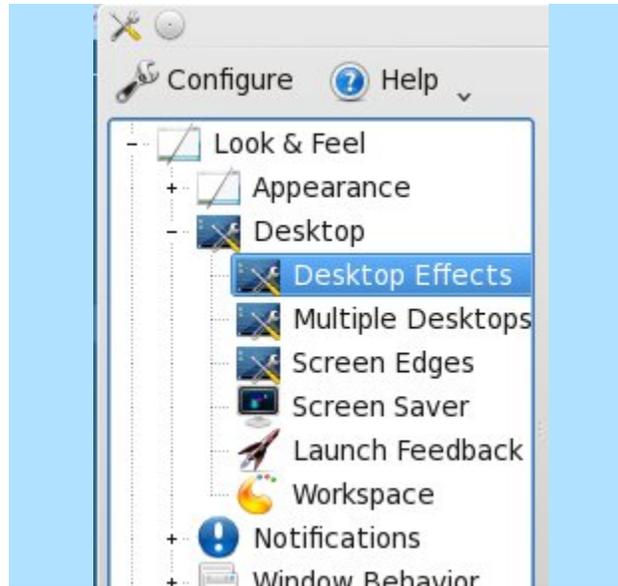
The first tab in the window that opens to the right of the selection tree in KCC is the General tab. To enable Desktop Effects, simply place a check mark in the box at the top. It is turned off by default. Hit the "Apply" button at the bottom of the window to make the selection active. Under "Compositing State," is confirmation that compositing has been turned on, along with a button to suspend compositing (you may wish to temporarily suspend compositing when you are doing CPU and memory intensive tasks). You can also suspend and resume compositing by pressing Alt + Shift + F12 from the keyboard.

Under Common Settings, you can opt to turn on "Improved window management," "Shadows" and "Various animations." It is the latter that provides the

best eye candy. With animations activated, you can choose from several default window switching effects and several default effects for desktop switching. In the screen shot above, I have selected the "Cover Switch" effect to use for window switching, and the "Desktop Cube Animation" as the effect to use for desktop switching. Below is an example of some of the default effects you can choose from for window switching. (I don't have any pictures of desktop switching, but you can leave that as an exercise of discovery for yourself).
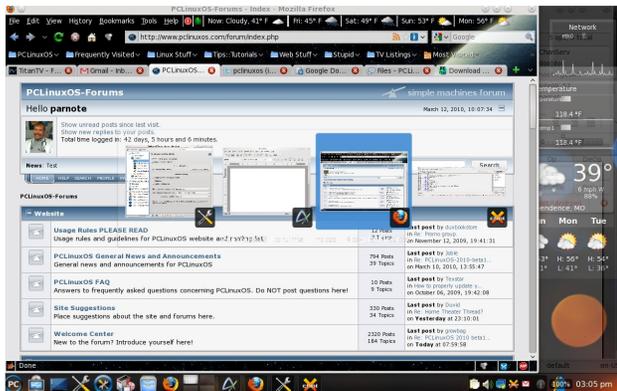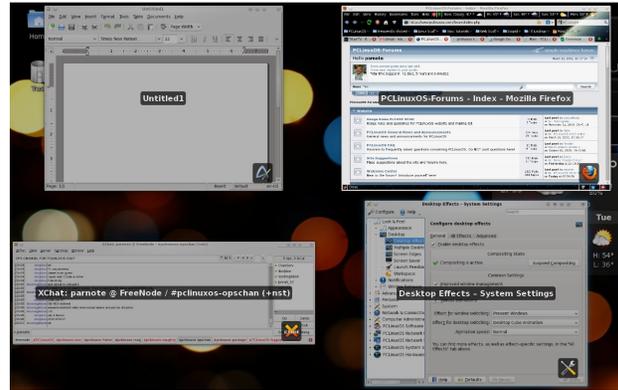
Window switching effects: Cover Switch (top L), Box Switching (bottom L), Present Windows (top R), and Flip Switch (bottom R)

From the second tab, "All Desktop Effects," you can choose from a host of other special effects. Some you may wish to explore are exploding windows when you close them, or magic lamp, which makes your windows appear as if they are being sucked

into Aladdin's lamp when you minimize them. Enable the desired effect by placing a check mark in the box to the left of the title of the effect you want to use. And feel free to play around with those effects and customize your Desktop Effects.

The last tab, labeled "Advanced," is where you can (of course) make some more advanced settings as to how Desktop Effects are displayed on your
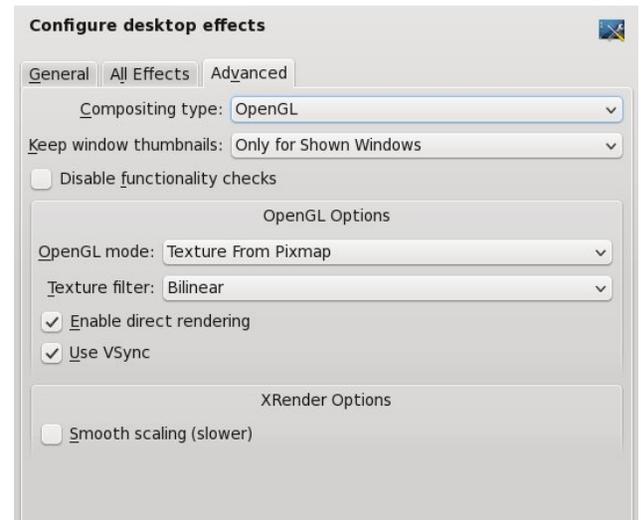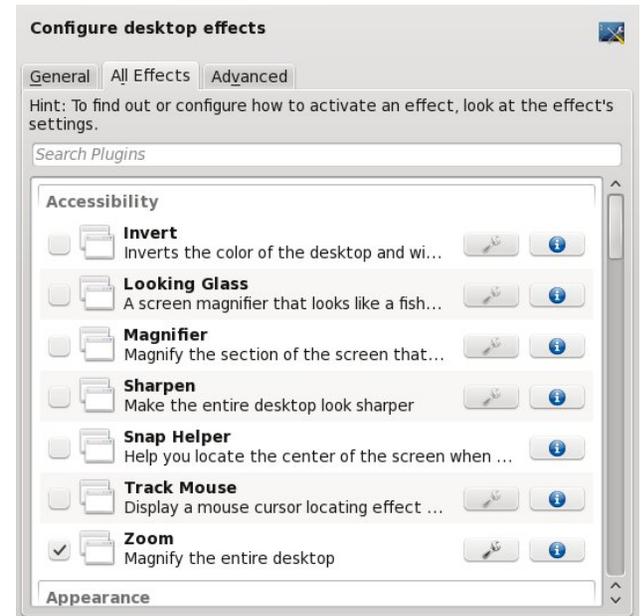
computer. Most users will have little or no need to mess with these default settings.

Although Desktop Effects doesn't have as many features as Compiz, it may go a long way to opening up window compositing to users who have never used or considered it before. Will it fundamentally enhance your productivity? Probably not. But then again, since it breaks the typical monotony of the desktop that most of us have become accustomed to, it just may help make you more productive. If you have the hardware to support it, you should give it a try. You can always turn it off again if you get tired of it.

Screenshot Showcase
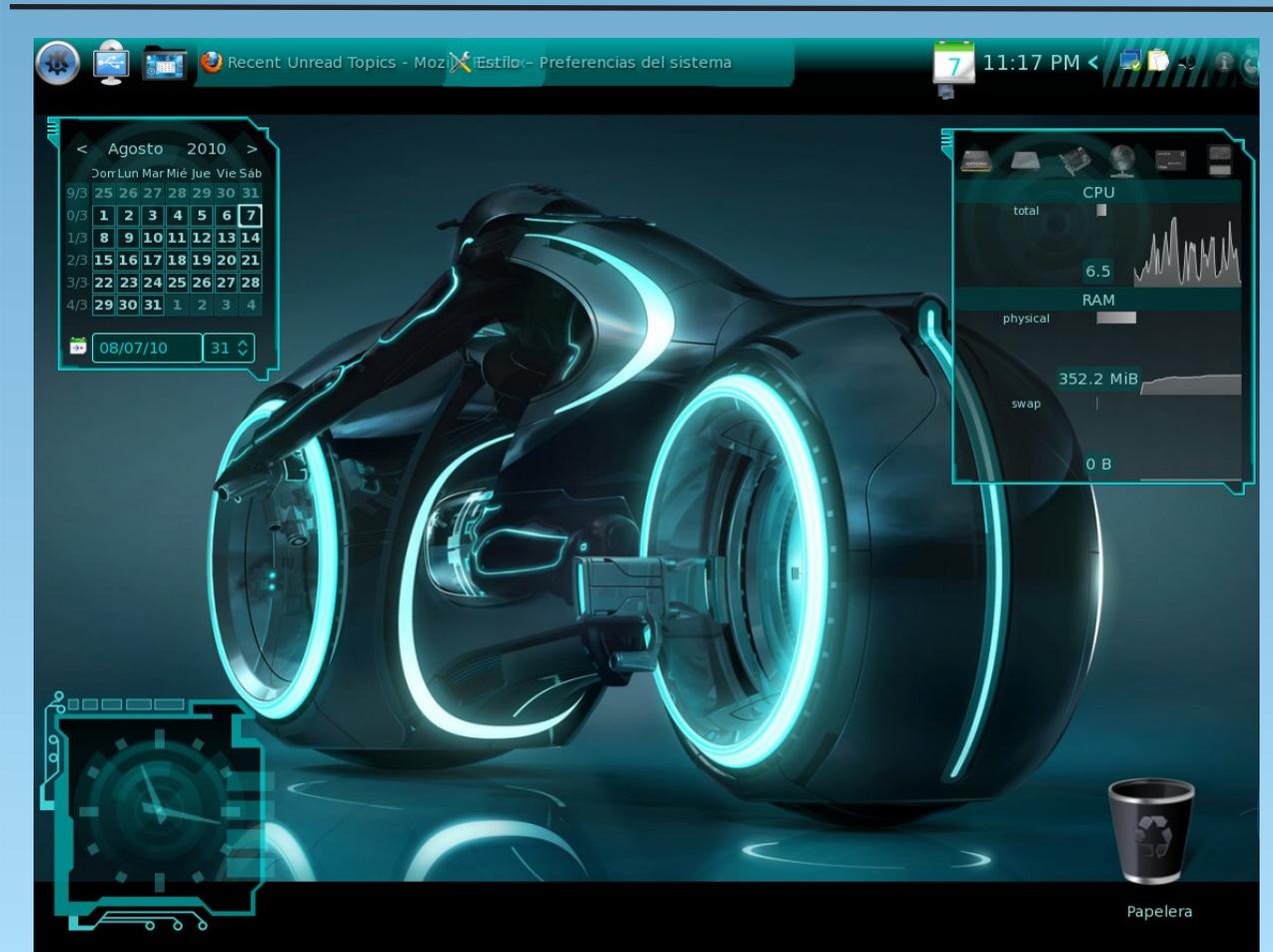
Posted by T6 on August 9, 2010

by Paul Arnote (parnote)

First came Xpdf, the PDF reader for X-Windows. Then, Kpdf was created for KDE, based off of the efforts of Xpdf. Then, born from Kpdf and the 2005 Google Summer of Code, came Okular, the new universal document reader for KDE 4 SC. During the process, Okular became a lot smarter, and learned how to display a lot more than just PDF files.

Replacing Kpdf, Okular can now view not only PDF files, but also most image files, OpenOffice.org Writer (*.odt) files, postscript files, compiled HTML Help files, EPub e-book files, faxes, and other formats. The chart at right, from the KDE 4 Userbase, fills in the details of supported file types that Okular can view.

Remarkably, Okular cannot currently handle displaying simple TXT files, HTML files, or Microsoft Office files. Okular is only capable of displaying OpenOffice.org Writer (*.odt) files, but currently chokes on any of the other OpenOffice.org file formats for the rest of the OpenOffice.org office suite. However, any shortcomings that Okular may currently have with displaying various file formats are likely to be filled in by developers writing additional document format handlers for Okular.

Okular keeps all the same power and abilities as Kpdf, and builds on it by increasing the number of other document files it can handle or display. The first screen shot on the next page shows Okular doing what it does best: displaying a PDF file. It can also annotate PDF files, and when you save the annotated document, any other user can open the annotated file using Okular. It can also bookmark

Document Format Handlers

This page always refers to the stable series of Okular (currently KDE 4.2.x).

Features/Formats	PDF	PS	Tiff	CHM	DjVu	Images	DVI	XPS	ODT	Fiction Book	Comic Book	Plucker	EPub	Fax
Main library used	poppler	libspectre	libTIFF	chmlib	DjVuLibre								epub	
Loading	✪	✪	✪	✪	✪	✪	✪	✪	⏳	⏳	✪	⏳	✪	✪
Rendering	✪	✪	✪	✪	✪	✪	✪	⏳	✪	✪	✪	✪	⏳	✪
Threaded rendering	✪	✪	✪	✪	✪	✪	✗	(Qt >= 4.4.2)	✗	✗	✪	✗	✗	✪
Document information	✪	✪	⏳	⏳	✪	✗	✪	✪	✪	✪		⏳	✪	✗
TOC	✪			✪	✪		✪	✪	✪	✪		✗	✪	
Document fonts	✪						✗	✗				✗	✗	
Text extraction	✪			⏳	⏳		✪	✪	✪	✪		✗	✗	
Links	✪			✪	✪		✪	✗	✪	✪		✗	✪	
Paper Size		✗					✗	✗				✗		
Printing	✪	✪	✪	✗	✪	✪	✪	✪	✪	✪	✪	✗	✪	✪
Text Exporting	✪			✗	✗		✗	✪	✪	✪		✪	✪	
Other Features														
Annotations	⏳				⏳		✗	⏳	✗			✗		
Forms	⏳							✗	✗			✗		
Inverse search	(pdfsync)						✪	✗				✗		
DRM	✪							✗				✗		
Embedded files	✪							✗				✗		
Sounds	✪							✗	✗			✗	✗	
Movies	⏳							✗	✗			✗	✗	

Chart Key: ✪ Working Feature ⏳ Work In Progress ✗ Unavailable
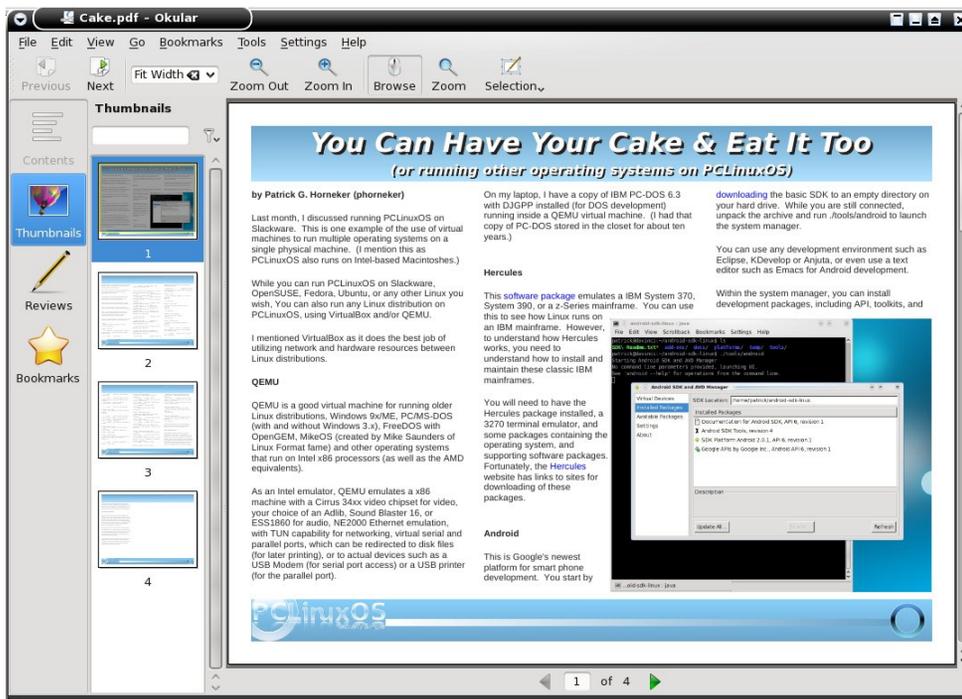
your PDF files, which is a handy feature when reading PDF versions of e-books, allowing you to save your current place in the book and to continue reading from where you left off during a previous reading session.

Another cool feature of Okular is it's ability to display multiple pages. You can select for Okular to display "facing pages" in a PDF document, or provide an overview of all the pages (as in the screen capture above, right, of the February 2010 issue of the PCLinuxOS Magazine), to allow you to see how the whole document flows and appears together.
Overall, Okular represents a giant leap forward from
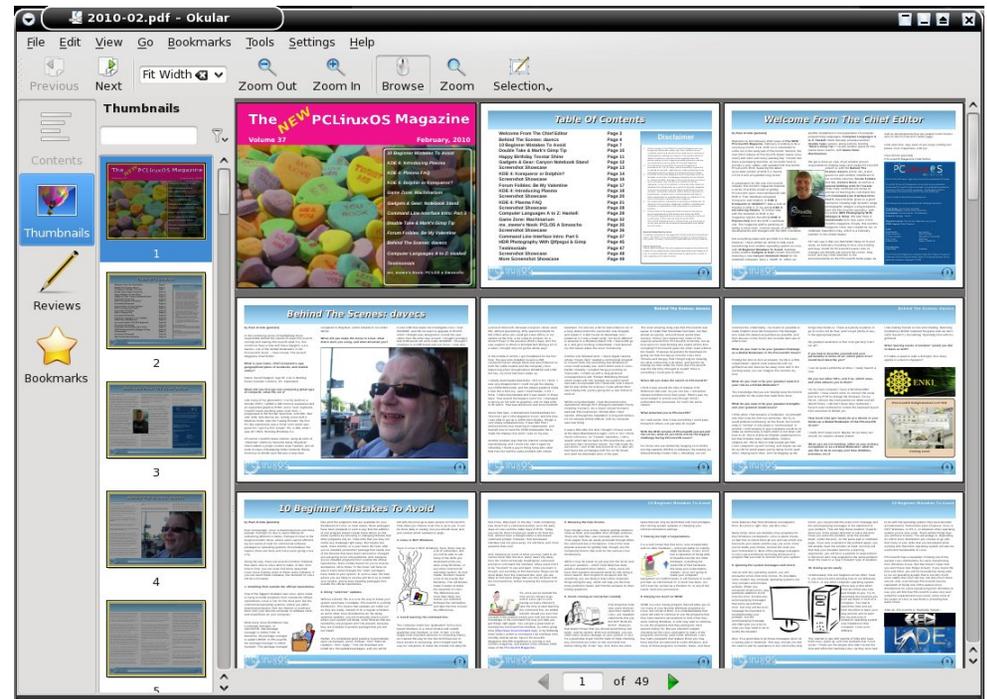
Kpdf, which could only display PDF and PS files. With the additional capability of displaying more types of files, Okular is poised to become the one-stop document viewing application in not only Linux, but also every other platform supported by KDE 4 SC. Already made more powerful by it's increased capabilities, Okular will become an unstoppable force in document viewing, once other document format handlers are in place, and a greater variety of file types are supported, especially those file formats specified earlier.

KDE 4: KSystemLog Reveals Your Log Files

by Paul Arnote (parnote)

Most of you reading this already know that PCLinuxOS is an incredibly stable operating system. But, as with any computer operating system, things may sometimes go awry. And when it does, you are likely to find clues to your problem in one of the many log files maintained on a regular basis in PCLinuxOS. Fortunately, PCLinuxOS users have two excellent ways to access those log files: either through the PCLinuxOS Control Center (PCC), or through a KDE 4 utility, called KSystemLog.
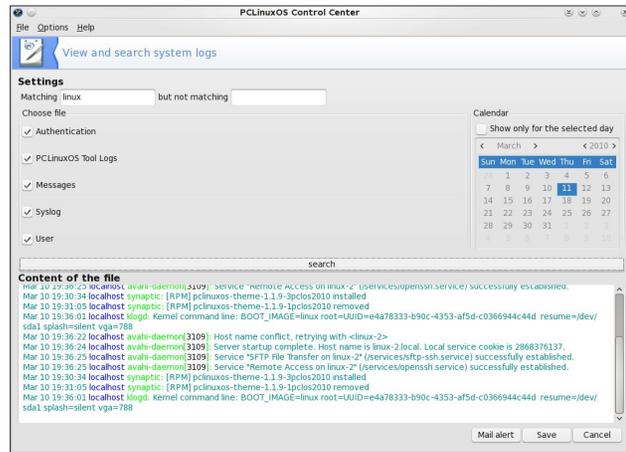
The PCC utility is located under System » Administration Tools » View and Search System Logs, when you launch PCC. From it, you can select which log files you want to search through. In the example screen shot, I've marked all five categories of log files.

At the top of the window, you type in the term you are searching for. I've used the term "linux," but you can just as easily type in "eth0" or "video" or any other term you want to search for.

Drop down vertically to the middle of the window, and click on the "Search" button to conduct your search. The bottom portion of the window shows your search results, under "Content of the file."

At the very bottom of the window, you are given the choices to "Mail alert," "Save" the data, or "Cancel" the operation.

You can also restrict your search to only include data specific to the selected day, in the upper right corner of the window by simply checking the box above the calendar that is displayed. You can also further refine your search by specifying a term you wish to exclude from your search results, by filling in that term in the "but not matching" box.

Of course, the PCC method of viewing and searching your log files is available to every user running *any* version of PCLinuxOS, regardless of the desktop environment you are using. Just remember you will have to supply a search term. However, if you are running KDE 4, you have another choice that allows you to view your log files, without specifying a search term. You can use **KSystemLog**, which is installed from Synaptic as part of the KDEAdmin4 package. KSystemLog is designed to make it easy for beginning KDE users to find the various system logs on their system, but also designed to make the log files accessible and useful for more experienced users.
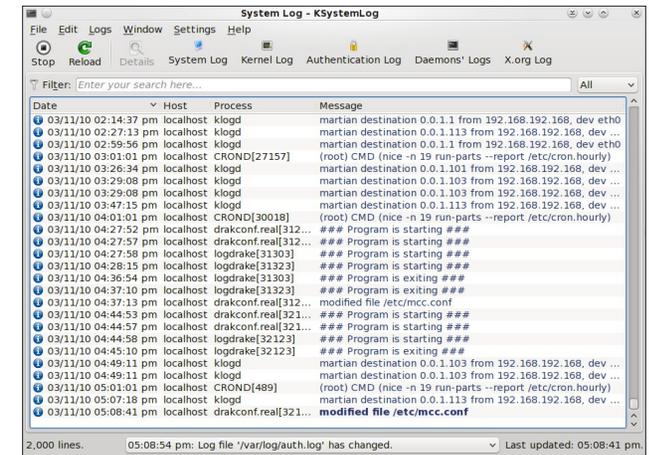

Just as with PCC, you will need to supply your root password when launching KSystemLog. When it opens, you are presented with the System Log preloaded, as in the second screen shot.

If you want to view a different log file, simply click on one of the log files listed across the top of the KSystemLog window, or select one from the "Logs" menu (there are quite a few more log files listed under the "Logs" menu than just those listed across the top of the window). By doing so, the log you select will replace the System Log in the main window.

KSystemLog also sports a multiple tab interface, so you can view multiple log files at one time. By pressing Ctrl + T, or by selecting Window » New Tab from the menus, you can open up a new tab, and select which log file you would like to view in that tab.

If you select a log file that does not exist, or cannot be found in the default location, you will receive the following error message box:
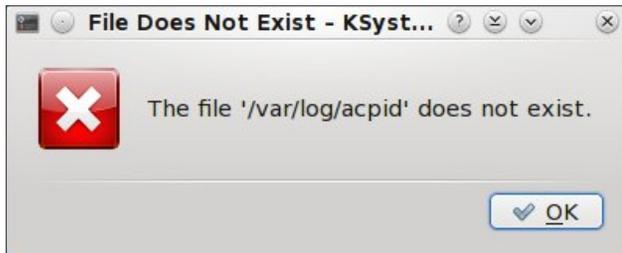
Fortunately, there are quite a few configuration options for KSystemLog.

Under the General section, you can specify which log file you want to be loaded by default when KSystemLog starts. The default is System Log, but you can choose to have no log file automatically loaded, or you can choose from 16 other log files. They include:

* ACPI Log
* Apache Access Log
* Apache Log
* Authentication Log
* Cron Log
* Cups Web Log1000
* Cups Log
* Cups Page Log
* Cups PDF Log
* Daemons' Log
* Kernel Log
* Postfix Log
* Samba Access Log
* Samba Log
* X.org Log
* X Session Log

Right below the selection of the log file to load when KSystemLog starts, you can specify how many lines of the log file to load. Some of the log files, due to how complete and complex they are, can become quite long. The default number of lines to load is 1,000. In the example above, I've increased the maximum number of lines to 2000. You also have an option to remove duplicate lines, although doing so may cause slower loading of the log files.

When you select the individual log files listed on the left side of the Configuration, you are given the chance to specify a different location where each log

file resides, just in case log files are stored in different locations from Linux distro to distro.

Somewhat surprisingly, the Boot Log was left out of the choices you can choose to view. Never fear, as you have a couple of options. First, you can simply point one of the log file categories to load the Boot Log, instead of the one it's suppose to display. The only shortcoming to this is that the Boot Log will always be displayed with the name of the category you chose to change. For example, if you specify the Boot Log in place of the Apache Access Log, the label will still read Apache Access Log, while displaying the Boot Log. The other way to display the Boot Log is to add it to the end of the System Log. Select "Add File ..." from the configuration dialog box, and select the Boot Log from the list of logs that occupy /var/log.

With KSystemLog, you can search the log file being currently displayed (Edit » Find...). You can also save the log file (File » Save), and you can even add an entry to the currently displayed.

All in all, Linux is about choice. Every PCLinuxOS user can view and search the log files on their system through PCC. And KDE 4 users have another choice to use the KDE 4 tool, KSystemLog.

Visit Us On IRC

- Launch your favorite IRC Chat Client software (xchat, pidgin, kopete, etc.)

- Go to freenode.net

- Type "/join #pclinuxos-mag" (without the quotes)

Disclaimer

Configuring PCLinuxOS 2010 KDE 4 For External USB Speakers

by Alain Baudrez (Wamukota)

If you are like me, you like listening to music while working at the computer. Most desktops have a nice set of external good quality speakers attached because you like good quality. If you have a laptop that audio quality is sometimes a far-fetched dream.

In come the external USB speakers set. You find a nice set, buy one, come home, plug it in, the control led lights up and … nothing. Sound still comes through the laptop's speakers, though. Does that mean that the USB speaker set is not recognized? Maybe, but mostly it is just a case of telling PCLinuxOS to get its priorities right.

Modify the system settings:

  * Open the 'Configure Your Desktop' application
  * Select the option 'Computer Administration'
  * Activate the 'Multimedia' option
  * Select the Device Preference 'Audio Output' - 'Music'

You'll be presented with a similar interface (bottom).

As you see, on my box, both the internal (ATI) and external (USB) audio devices are recognized, with the internal one being the one with the highest priority.

Change the priority

It is just a matter of sliding the internal card below the USB speakers (click on it with the mouse and drag it to the second position), and now your external speakers will be used to output audio from your audio applications.
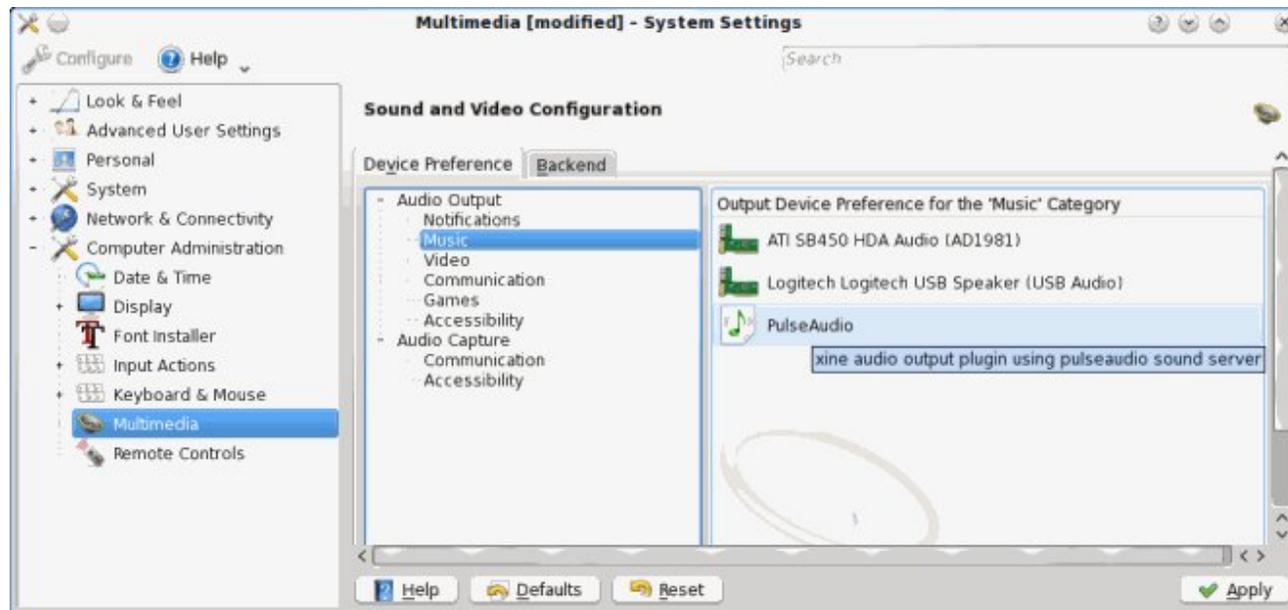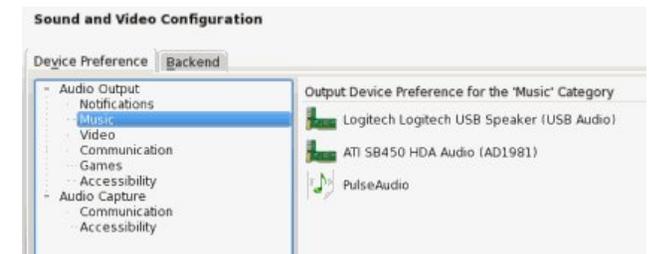
Do the same for the other Output devices. (Video, Communication, …)

Configure KMix

Right-click on the KMix icon in the systray, and configure the USB device.

Don't forget to set the 'Master Channel' to your USB device if you want to control the audio level using KMix.

Disconnected USB speakers

If you disconnect the external speakers, this is reflected in the System Settings, as the USB entry is grayed out.
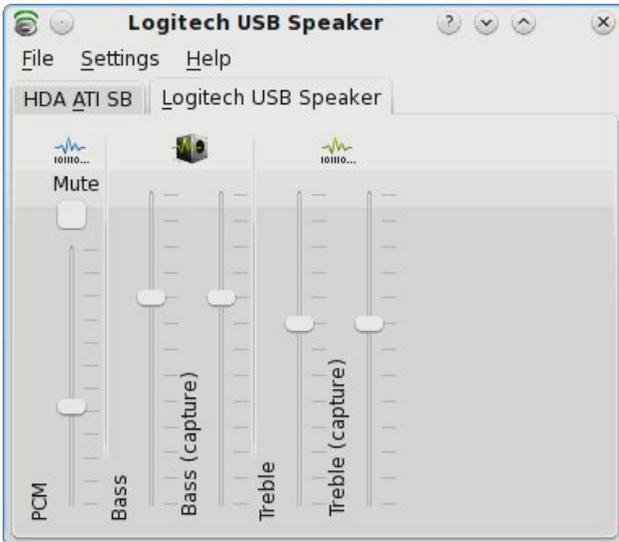
In that case, the second device – the internal audio card – will be automatically selected. Upon logging in, a temporary warning message appears on top of your screen or through KNotify and you are back in the 'old' PCspeaker output.

The next time you plug in the USB speakers, they will be used.

Nice to know

Although you now have the correct settings, some applications might still output their audio through the PC speakers. In that case, it is just a matter of modifying the program's audio preferences and selecting the USB speakers as main audio output device.