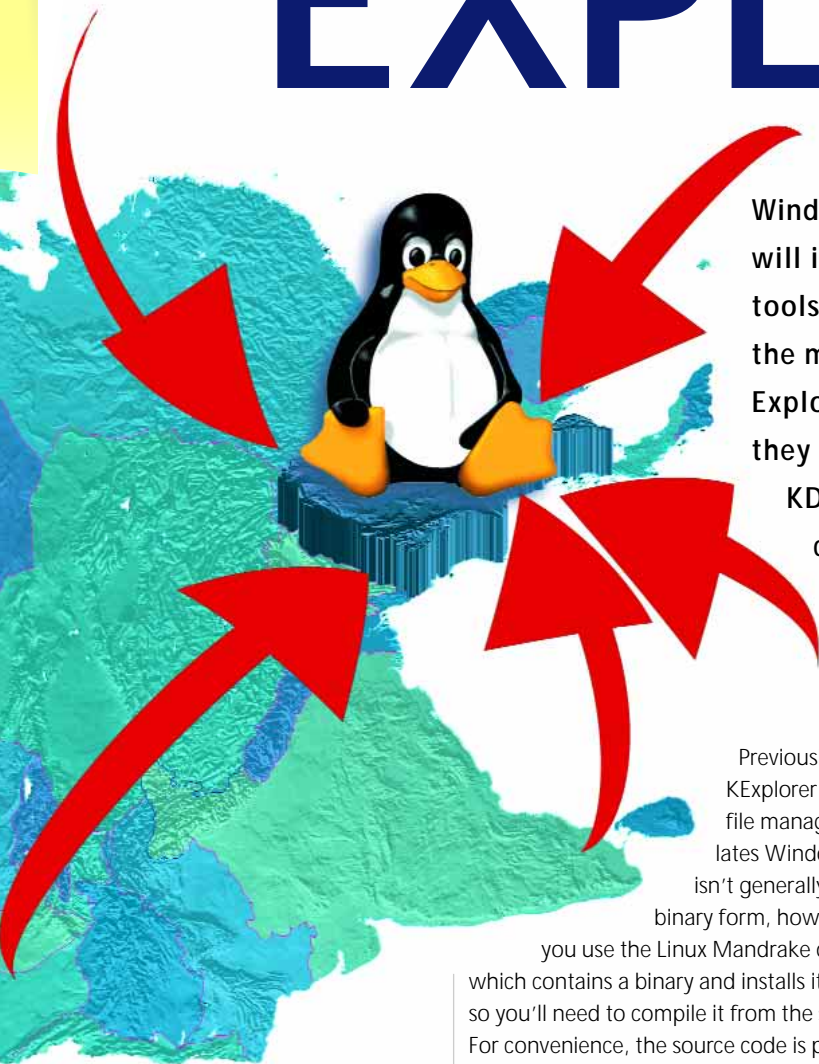A powerful file manager for KDE

MORE LIKE WINDOWS EXPLORER

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Windows users trying out Linux for the first time will immediately notice the absence of familiar tools they have come to take for granted. One of the most obvious ones they will miss is the Windows Explorer. If they choose GNOME for their desktop they will of course have Midnight Commander. But KDE's file manager KFM (at least in KDE 1.x) is by comparison a bit basic. A solution is available, though, in the form of kruiser.

Previously known as KExplorer – kruiser is a file manager that emulates Windows Explorer. It isn't generally available in binary form, however (unless you use the Linux Mandrake distribution, which contains a binary and installs it as standard) so you'll need to compile it from the source code. For convenience, the source code is provided on the cover CD.

Installation

You can find the package containing the source code of kruiser on the CD in the directory *Software/kruiser/*. For the most up-to-date version, visit the home page of the kruiser project which is:*http://devel-home.kde.org/~kruiser/*. The current version (0.4) can be downloaded by FTP from

ftp://khnopff.emic.ucl.ac.be/pub/kruiser/distributions/kruiser-0.4.tar.gz.
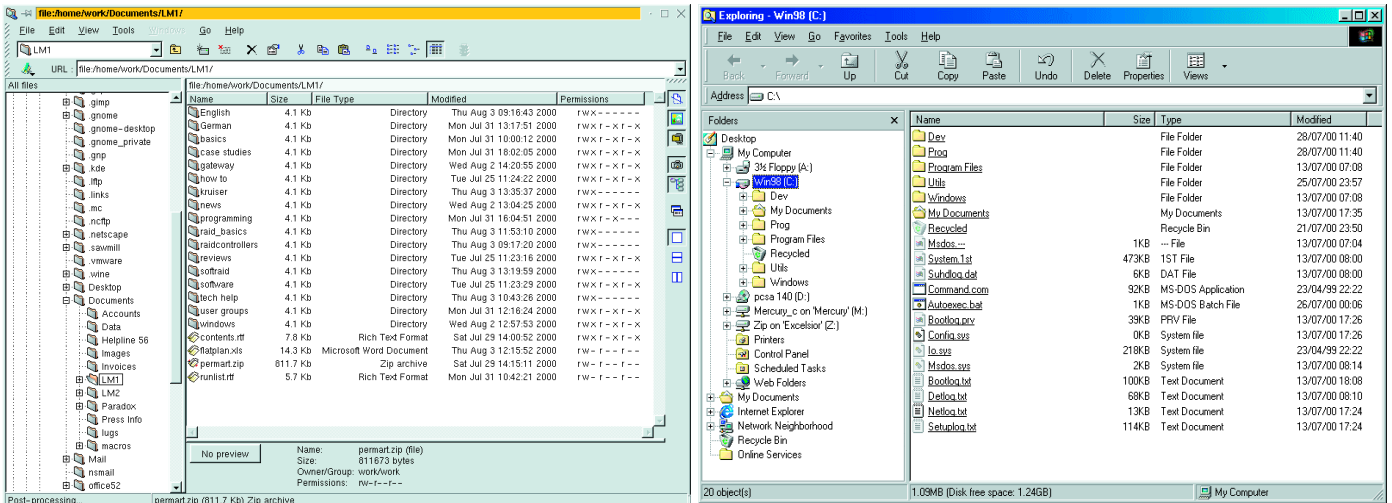
After downloading the package or copying it from the CD, switch to a suitable installation directory (e.g. */usr/local/src/*) and unpack it there. Administrator rights are needed to do this so you should first switch to *root* using the *su* command:

```
[blue<\@>dual ~]$ su -
Password: *****
[root<\@>dual ~blue]# cd /usr/local/src
[root<\@>dual src]# tar xzf /tmp/kruiser-0.❷
4.tar.gz
```

The last command unpacks the source code archive – assuming that the kruiser package is located in the */tmp* directory. If not then insert the correct path (e.g.*/mnt/cdrom/Software/kruiser/*). In the next three steps, the source text files are **configured** and compiled, and the finished program files are installed in the appropriate location:

```
[root<\@>dual src]# cd kruiser-0.4
[root<\@>dual kruiser-0.4]# ./configure
...
[root<\@>dual kruiser-0.4]# make
...
[root<\@>dual kruiser-0.4]# make install
```

Starting the program

After restarting the KDE panel (right-click it, select Restart), you can now start kruiser from the K menu. You will find kruiser under the entry *Utilities/KDE Explorer* (Fig. 1 – right).

Double-click again at last!

If you're a Windows user then the Windows double-click will be second nature. And if you've already dabbled in KDE you'll have found that double-clicking opens two editors, starts Netscape twice or opens two instances of a picture you have found in the *kfm* file manager. A single click will no doubt seem unnatural, although with kruiser this is no longer a problem.

Navigation through the directories performed the same way as using Windows Explorer. To the left of the screen there is a familiar **tree view** (Figs. 2 and 3 – over page), where sub-directories can be opened or closed with a mouse-click on the plus or minus sign. You can also double-click a directory name in the right-hand half of the window to switch to the required sub-directory. You can move up one level in both Explorer and kruiser by pressing the Backspace key or by manually selecting the directory above in the tree view.

Of course, double-clicking is not only used to switch directories: the main use is opening a document using its associated program. kruiser has a standard application registered for most types of document. If it doesn't recognise a file type, a dialog looking surprisingly similar to that of Windows Explorer opens, in which you can select a program to use to open the document (Figs. 4 and 5 – over page).

Try your luck with an unknown file (in our tests, kruiser did not recognise .pcx files, for example). If you cannot find a matching program in the list but know the command name, you can enter it in the empty field above. (You should be able to permanently associate a program with a particular file type using kruiser's Options dialog box; to open it use *Edit, Preferences* and select *Extensions*. However, this feature doesn't work in the version we tried.

You can also use a slow double-click with kruiser. If you click twice on a file or directory name with a sufficient gap between the clicks, the name can be edited – just like Windows. You can go to any position in the name with the cursor keys and modify it.

If you've been using Linux for a while and are used to the single click of KDE (it's easier, when you get used to it) you can tell kruiser to fall into line. To

Fig. 1: Starting kruiser via KDE's K menu

Configuration: The installation of a program supplied in source code format always follows the same pattern. After unpacking the archive you will have created a new directory full of files and, often, further sub-directories. You should firstly run the script file from this directory by typing *./configure* (the *./* before the command is necessary because the current directory is not set in the **path**). The configure script analyses the system environment, searches for existing or missing help programs and libraries, checks their versions and generates the Makefile which is necessary for the next step. The make command basically means "create here". There will be instructions in the Makefile describing how to create finished executable programs from the source files. Thus typing make install *copies the new program files to appropriate locations in the system, for example: help files to /usr/man, a configuration file to /etc and the program itself to /usr/bin. Out of interest, the path is stored in the environment variable $PATH and tells the shell which directories to look in for a program if it is called without specifying its full path. For instance, if $PATH=/bin:/usr/bin:/usr/local/bin and you enter the command myprog, then the shell will search (in this sequence) for /bin/myprog, /usr/bin/myprog and /usr/local/bin/myprog.*

Tree view: A tree view is used to illustrate directory structure. Directory hierarchies are shown by means of indents and lines between different hierarchy levels. The great thing about a tree view is that you have the option of simply hiding parts of the hierarchy that aren't currently of interest.

Symbolic link: *A symbolic link is a directory entry which contains just a reference to another file. Think of the link as a small text file in which the name of the other file is stored. If such a link is accessed, Linux then looks to see what name is hidden behind the link and passes all queries on to it. It's a little like a Windows shortcut.*

rwxrwxrwx: *This is the notation normally used in Unix for access rights: r, w and x stand for read, write and eXecute rights. The three groups of three stand for the rights of the file holder, group or other users in that order. If there is a dash instead of one of these letters this means that the corresponding right has not been assigned.*
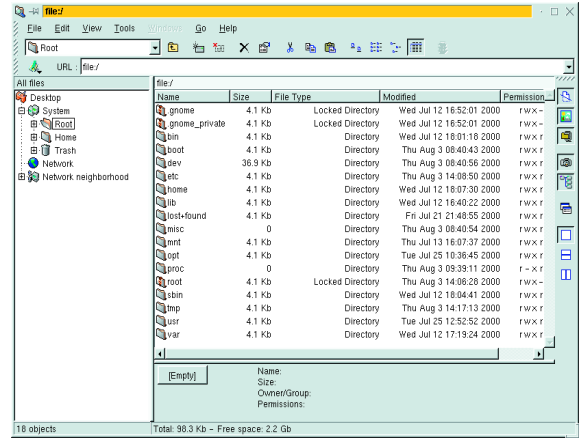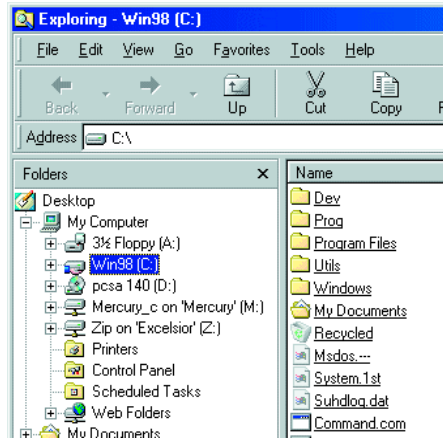
■

Fig. 2: Tree views in Windows Explorer are just the same ... Fig. 3: ... as their counterparts in kruiser

do this, call up kruiser's Options dialog with *Edit, Preferences*, switch to the page called *Misc* and check the box *Open on single click (KFM style)* (Fig. 6 – below).

Drag & Drop weaknesses

Kruiser supports drag and drop but with certain limitations. Files can be copied and moved within a kruiser window – you can drag a file from the direc-

tory currently displayed into one of the directories in the tree view on the left-hand side, for example. And if you have a number of kruiser windows open you can also drag files from one window to another. When you release the object, a menu appears in which you can select between *Move*, *Copy* and *Link*. *Link* creates a **symbolic link**.

Other drag and drop actions, such as between kruiser and the desktop or the standard file manager *kfm*, are not possible at the moment. If you try to drag an object out of kruiser, a "no entry" icon is displayed. The same thing happens if you try to drag a file into kruiser.

Kruiser tools

Of course, kruiser isn't merely an Explorer clone. It has a few useful features above and beyond the program it was modelled on. One of these is the thumbnail picture preview which can be activated using the menu *View, View, Image preview* (Fig. 6). When a picture file is selected, a thumbnail image of it is shown at the bottom of the window. This feature is also useful for ordinary files, for which information such as the file size, owner and group is shown along with access rights in the normal **rwxrwxrwx** notation.   ■
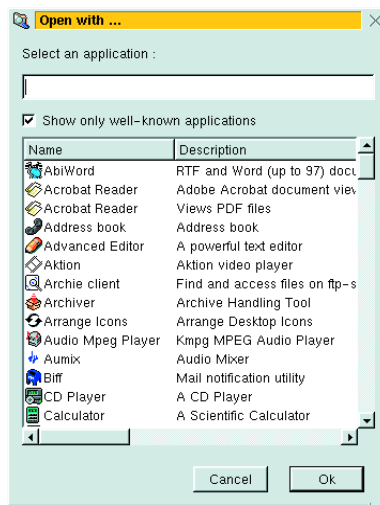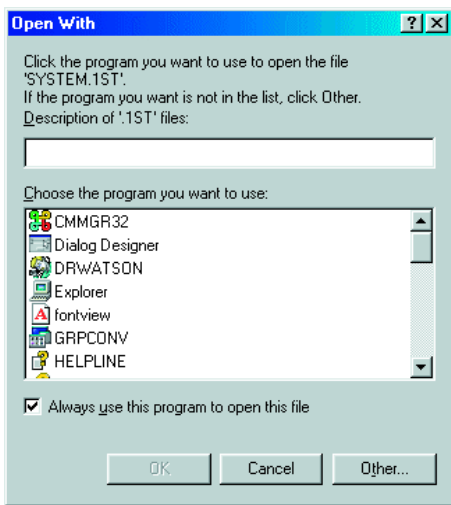
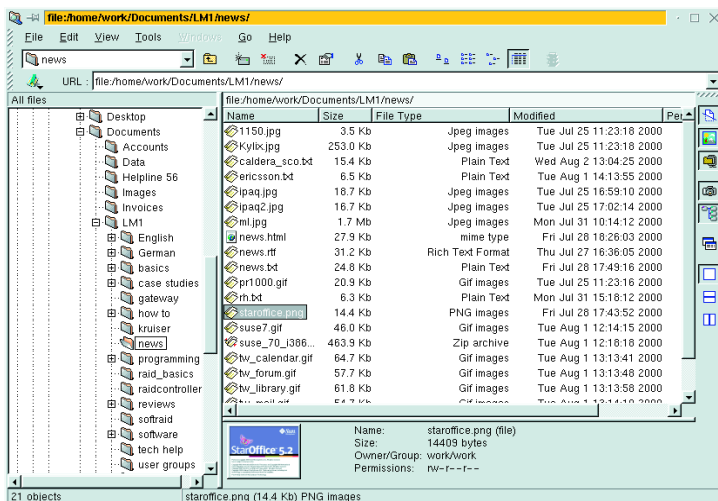**Fig. 4: Original (Windows) version ... Fig. 5: ... and kruiser counterpart: Open with which program?**
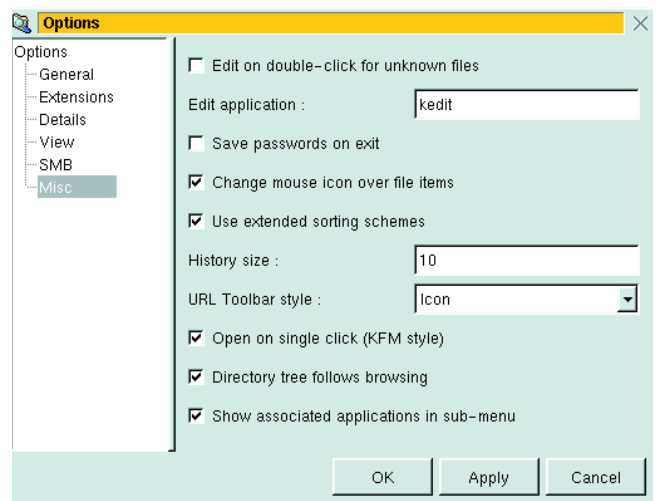
Fig. 6: Explorer cannot do this: Picture preview in kruiser

Fig. 6: Changing some of kruiser's configuration options