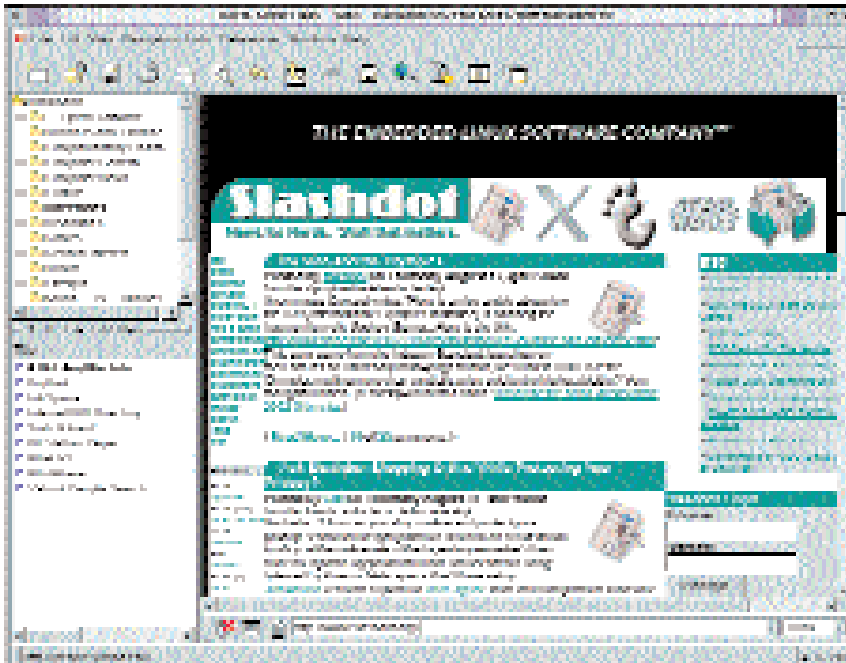


Opera for Linux 4.0a Technology Preview

VIRTUOSO

PERFORMER

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A lean, fast web browser with a clean user interface: that's Opera

One of the biggest sources of frustration when using Linux as a desktop is the lack of a decent web browser. Netscape Navigator, let's be honest, is a dog of a program that no-one would use if there was anything better. Well, soon there will be. In fact, there already is, as this pre-beta preview of Opera for Linux is already nicer to use than Netscape's heap of shoddy code.

Opera is a web browser that has already won many friends in the Windows world despite the fact that — unlike the alternatives — you have to pay for it. Version 4 is in the process of being released, and has been developed in such a way as to make it portable to many platforms. The Linux version is lagging well behind that for Windows, and even BeOS,

and this Technology Preview 4 is missing quite a few features. But it's already a useful browser as well as an interesting taster of what's to come.

One of the reasons Opera fans pay good money for this program is that it's lean and fast. The .tar.bz2 archive weighs in at under a megabyte and contains a license agreement and a single executable that you just copy somewhere like /usr/local/bin. It requires glibc 2.1 and Qt 2.1, which you'll need to install if your system doesn't already have them. Opera claims it will run on out-of-the-box Corel 1.0, Red Hat 6.1, Mandrake 6.0 and Caldera 2.2 systems: it ran immediately on Mandrake 7.1 too.

Opera has a cleanly designed main window that's quite configurable using the Preferences menu. There are options for setting up things like a caching policy and security. There's a hotlist which can be displayed in a panel on the left and contains links to various interesting sites. You will be able to add and remove sites to create your own personal list. At present, though, many of the menu options either haven't been implemented or unceremoniously crash the browser. Remember, this isn't even a beta yet, so faults are only to be expected.

As a simple browser, though, Opera for Linux is already very useful. It supports HTTP 1.0 and 1.1, HTML 3.2 and 4.0, CSS 1 and 2, displays GIF, PNG and JPEG images, executes most ECMAScript programs and browses FTP sites. There's good XML support and HTTP authorisation, SSL and TLS communication have been implemented. There are still a few problems with page rendering, but Opera already does a better job than Navigator 4.7 and even the Netscape 6 preview.

According to information on the web site, new Technology Previews are released every three to five weeks, so there should have been at least one new version since this was written. Opera has the potential to be the best web browser on the Linux platform, so this is one small, easy to install download that's definitely worth trying and will probably be worth paying for when the release version is shipped. ■

Info**Opera Software**

<http://www.operasoftware.com/linux/>