

DESKTOP COMPATIBILITY

Success on the desktop depends on the delivery of a well-crafted product. Mandrake and SuSE lead the field – but Caldera is catching up fast.

SuSE Linux 7.2 Professional and Personal

No sooner has YaST2 matured than SuSE users, with the SuSEWizard, get access to a new, at first fairly poorly equipped and ergonomically unrefined, tool whose growth and progress you will presumably be able to observe through the next versions. Essentially, at present, this can be used to turn the SuSE configuration of KDE into a standard KDE configuration.

The new SuSEWizard allows easy choice on how to start the system. Also new is the euro symbol support into diverse applications such as the console, Netscape and Star Office from the key combination AltGr (right Alt) +4.

Workstation suitability	SuSE Linux 7.2 Personal	SuSE Linux 7.2 Professional	Red Hat Linux 7.1 Deluxe Edition	Red Hat Linux 7.1 Professional Edition
Integration of the config-tools	Integration very good, but faulty in operation	Integration very good, but faulty in operation	unusable (1)	unusable (1)
X-Server Standard tool	SaX2	SaX2	Xf86xfg, Xconfigurator	Xf86xfg, Xconfigurator
Network configuration	good	good	unusable (2)	unusable (2)
Server services recognition	not automatic	no	no	no
Automount	no Automount, icons present	no Automount, icons present	Automount: yes / icons: yes (security loophole) (3)	Automount: yes / icons: yes (security loophole) (3)
Logical Volume Manager	on installation	yes	no	no
Problem-free change between Gnome/KDE	Menus of KDE integrated into Gnome, but not vice versa	KDE only	yes	yes
Menu/Desktop layout	KDE: good, Gnome: usable	KDE: good, Gnome: usable	Gnome: poor (fonts too small) / KDE: good	Gnome: poor (fonts too small) / KDE: good
Language support (system)	usable	usable	poor	poor
Antialiasing (X11)	no	no	no	no
Antialiasing (KDE)	yes	yes	no	no
Euro symbol support	Console, Xterm, KDE, SOffice, Netscape	Terminal and Office	no	no
Sound	Alsa and OSS	Alsa and OSS	neither RPM package alsa <i>nor</i> oss found	neither RPM package alsa <i>nor</i> oss found
Assessment	+	+	-	-

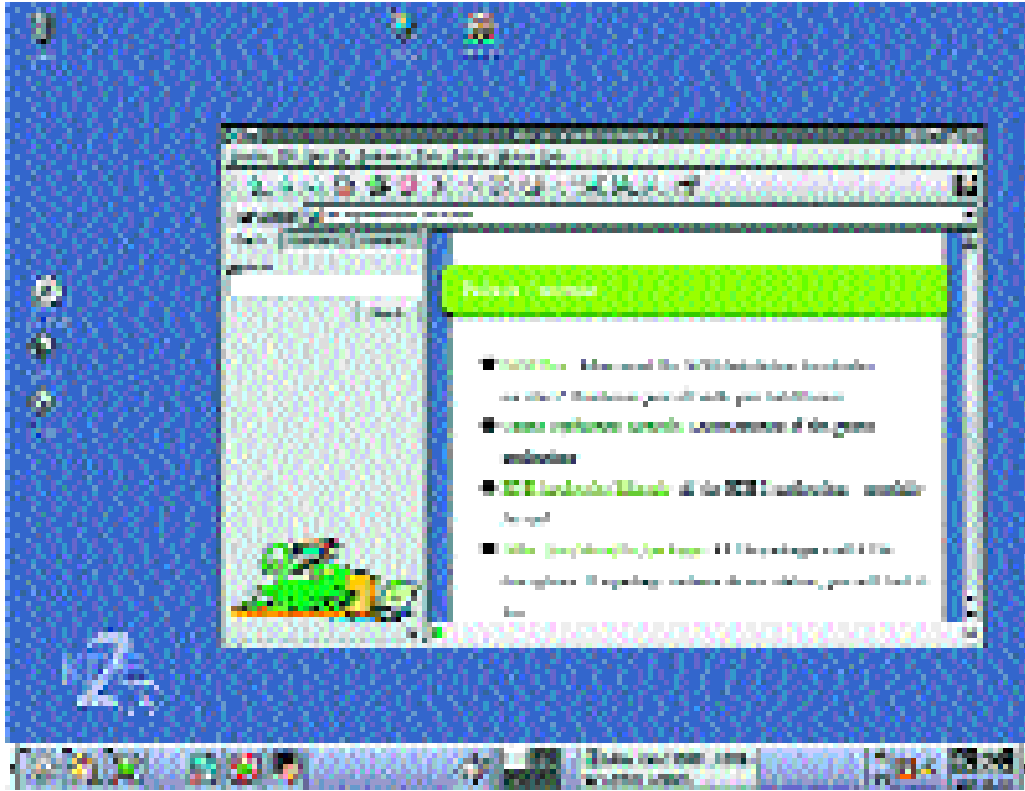
Because of the excellent selection of software and tidied-up KDE configuration, SuSE Linux is an ideal candidate as a desktop distribution.

Unfortunately the menu of an installed Gnome desktop does not appear in the KDE menu; only individual applications can be found.

Perfect example of a workstation: Apart from *sshd* no Internet servers whatsoever run after the installation.

Red Hat 7.1

When Red Hat 7.1 is implemented on workstations, a few annoying problems are to be expected. To adapt the installation and to set up Internet access, printer and a lot more besides, Red Hat attaches crucial importance to *linuxconf* - but installs it neither in the workstation nor the server installation, although the icons are in the control

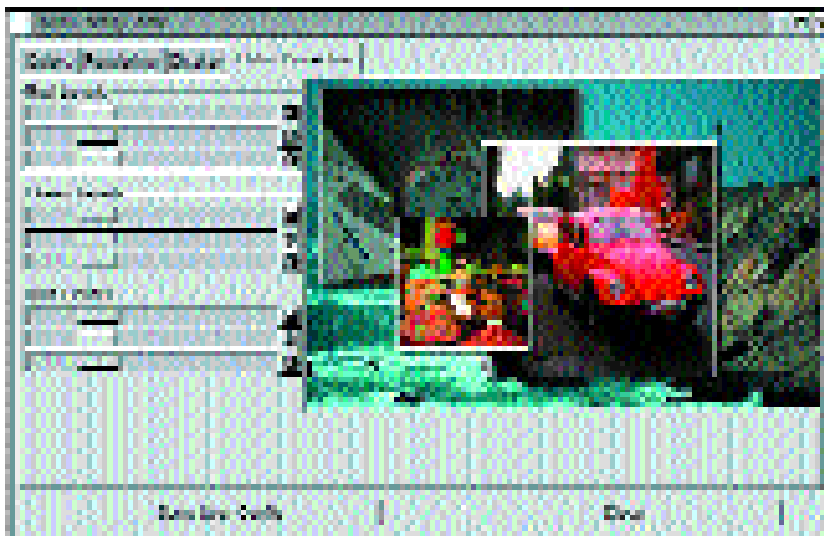
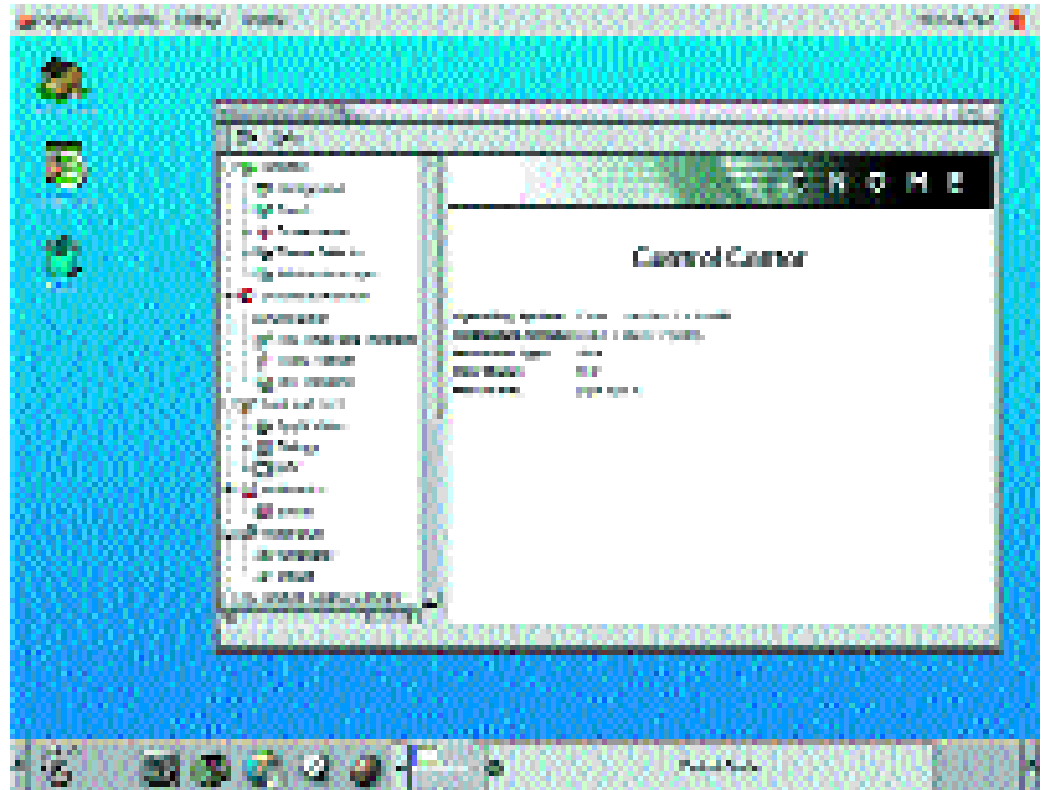


The standard SuSE desktop running KDE 2-1.2

Mandrake Linux 8.0 Power Pack	Mandrake Linux 8.0 Pro Suite	Caldera Open Linux Workstation 3.1	Caldera Open Linux Server 3.1	Progeny Debian 1.0
complete for workstation, network separate	complete for workstation, network separate	useful for initial configuration	useful for initial configuration	incomplete
Hard Drake	Hard Drake	Kxconfig	Kxconfig	Configlet for Gnome Control Center
usable	usable	good	good	usable for a network card with DHCP
yes / yes	yes/yes	very good	very good	yes, only on Gnome desktop
yes, with icons	yes, with icons	yes, with icons	yes, with icons	no
yes	yes	no	no	Change possible, but no integration of the Gnome menus into the K menu
yes	yes	KDE only	not applicable	usable
good	good	good	good	poor
good	good	good	good	no
yes	yes	no	no	no
yes	yes	no	no	no
-	-	no	no	no
Alsa	Alsa	OSS	OSS	Alsa and OSS
++	++	o	o	- +

[right]
SuSE running the Gnome 1.4 desktop

[below]
Red Hat screen colour correction is easily handled in Gnome with Imlib



searching via *rpmfind.net* are the only things that will help.

Mandrake 8.0 Power Pack

The individual configuration tools for system-relevant settings have been combined into the Mandrake Control Center. But this is not an all-rounder – important network tools are lacking. It is easy to use and intuitive for beginners and at many points a wealth of English help texts is offered for beginners and occasional users. Pros will prefer to potter about on the terminal or call up the relevant KDE or X tools direct.

For a major release, and in view of the newness of individual components, Mandrake 8.0 displays amazing stability, with only a few weaknesses in the total configuration and detail co-ordination.

Caldera Open Linux 3.1 Workstation and Server

For KDE/Qt developers and also for many typical office tasks, Caldera is a good choice because of its packages. It's a shame that for these very target groups they have left out easy-on-the-eye anti-aliasing of the fonts.

Nor should users be expected to configure a great deal of the system themselves. The system management tools integrated in the KDE control centre certainly invite you to do so, but all too often you stumble across nasty surprises. Just one example: On a PC with ATI-Mach64 card we changed the screen resolution, logged off and restarted the X server – unsuccessfully! By changing

panel. The system is thus almost impossible to administer; *linuxconf* must be installed by hand.

After installation the fixed width font in the Gnome favoured by Red Hat is set to Courier in eight-point font size and is therefore almost unreadable.

A later package installation – at least in the case of the inventor of the Red Hat Package Manager (RPM) – does not bring any credit, because the only way to proceed is manually. The user even has to find out for themselves which one of the ten CDs contains the library *libSDL_mixer.1.0.so*, in order to be able to install Tuxracer.

There are no file lists in the distribution. Because the search does not work in Gno-RPM, and K-Package only forages for the package name through one CD at a time, grepping all the CDs or

the run level we got stuck in a closed loop. The cause was an empty string in the driver entry in the */etc/X11/XF86Config-4*. The only way out was to edit the file manually.

The normal user doesn't stand a chance with problems like this. In network operation a *dcopserver*, which was not running prevented this as NIS-user under KDE. But with Caldera, anyone for whom the aged version numbers doesn't matter, will get a comparatively cleanly configured Linux, despite the occasional problems.

Caldera Open Linux 3.1: Conclusion

Caldera Open Linux 3.1, like its predecessor, is aimed at companies. You will not find the distribution on retail sale. Workstation and server variants do not glitter with opulent software packages and innovations, but apart from a few bugs, they are solidly built. The strength of Caldera has always lain in network operations, in fact Open Linux, of all the products tested, made the strongest showing.

Progeny 1.0

For advanced users, who have Gnome down as a desktop environment and would like to familiarise

themselves with Debian, Progeny Debian is ideally suited as a desktop computer. Since the Progeny CD images can be downloaded free at <http://archive.progeny.com/progeny/iso/>, one or two Debian users will definitely fall back on Progeny for their new installations, because despite all the inaccessibilities, the Progeny installer speeds up a Debian installation enormously. Those migrating from Windows might find the distribution a rather frustrating first experience of Linux. Newbies would be better starting off with other products.

KDE lovers must be easily satisfied. In the K-menu there are no entries for the configuration capplets accommodated in the Gnome control centre, and not without reason – outside Gnome they do not run at all, even when *gnomecc* is started manually. Without Star Office, the only choice for office tasks is Tex/ Latex, Abiword/Gnumeric or KOffice. Games are also rare.

On the other hand there is no shortage of Web browsers (Netscape, Konqueror, Mozilla), even if Mozilla could no longer be persuaded to run after the online update. But anyone who does not connect direct via Ethernet to the Net, will have some work to do installing modem/ISDN/ADSL, which sometimes fails without additional software off the Net (warning, recursion). ■

1/2

Anzeige
128 x185 mm