

K-tools: PixiePlus

POINTS OF VIEW

Stefanie Teufel takes a look at why Mosfet's latest sweet treat, PixiePlus, makes image viewing and editing easy



In these days of the digital camera and huge hard disks, the computer is beginning to replace the family album for storing your cherished pictures. But what's the point of storing all you digital memories without something to view, sort and edit them? That's why we take this opportunity to present PixiePlus, a program which will make archiving this year's holiday snaps twice the fun.

The latest version of this all-purpose graphical weapon can be obtained from the homepage of the author Mosfet, which might mean something to one or two of you from his poppy-bright KDE styles. At <http://www.mosfet.org/pixie/download.html> there are links to a package with the source code and also to the very latest Red Hat, Debian and SuSE packages. But beware: whatever happens, you must install the developer package, too. On our Red Hat 7.2 machine, PixiePlus wouldn't start without it. You should also be using at least KDE 2.x and Qt 2.3.x. With lower version numbers you will sadly not be able to enjoy the program; but those using more recent KDE and Qt versions shouldn't have any problems.

If you have decided on the sources, PixiePlus is installed into the unpacked source directory with the following commands:

```
make -f Makefile.cvs
../configure
make install
```

rpm users can fall back on the usual:

```
rpm -ivh pixieplus-kde*.rpm.
```

To start the program enter a simple *pixie &* in a terminal emulation of your choice, or via the K menu entry *Graphics/ PixiePlus Image Manager*. As you can see in Figure 1, the initial configuration is split into three different sections. The right-hand side of the window is occupied by the thumbnail browser, in which all files of the current folder are displayed (by the way, PixiePlus starts straight off in your home directory).

At the top left you will find the File Management Tab bar, which contains a directory tree. You can forage merrily through this with the mouse and thus define the directories your thumbnail browser should display. The third part of the starting window is taken up by the image preview. Just click once with the

K-tools

In this column we present tools, month by month, which have proven to be especially useful when working under KDE, solve a problem which otherwise is deliberately ignored, or are just some of the nicer things in life, which – once discovered – you wouldn't want to do without.

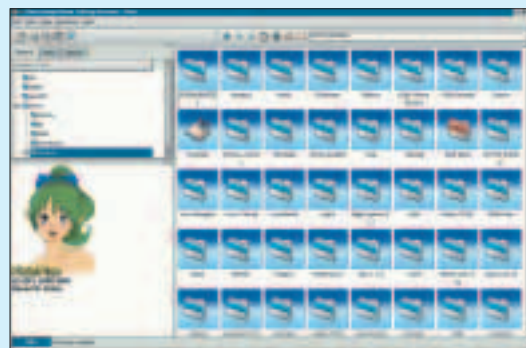


Figure 1: A file manager for images

mouse on any image in the browser and it will be displayed here immediately. Double-click on it and you'll see the image displayed at full size.

Your personal cinema

PixiePlus deals with the resources of your computer very efficiently, but however beautiful the thumbnail-sized preview of the images in the browser window may be, anyone who has hoarded thousands of photos in a folder will have to wait a while for Pixie to load the corresponding directory. This is why Mosfet does not give you automatic loading of images in the default setting, but marks these out with a stand-in icon, as shown in Figure 2.

Anyone who only has a few images stored or doesn't want to do without the preview can quickly replace Mosfet's image by clicking on the thumb icon in the menu list. Pixie then works for a while and loads in your images as thumbnails (Figure 3). Don't worry, you don't have to repeat this procedure every time you visit this directory. Once the process is complete, Pixie makes a note of this and in future will load the preview images in seconds.

If you have only saved a few image files on your computer, you may want to automate this procedure. This is also easily done by clicking on *View/ Previews/ Automake Previews*. PixiePlus thus automatically

generates preview images when you select a new folder. By the way, you can also freely define the size of the “thumbnails”, via the menu item *View/Thumbnail Size*. The default is “Large 90x90”. If you want the images larger or smaller, it’s easy to seek out the desired size here.

The navigator

PixiePlus is kind enough to support the type of navigation you might be accustomed to from file managers under KDE, which makes coping with over-stuffed directories full of images a great deal easier. All it takes is a glance at the menu list. There you will find icons, which are familiar from *Konqueror*, with which you can quickly leap into the home directory or move one directory back or forward by clicking on the arrow symbols. If these gymnastics take too long for your taste, you can click at any time on the folder you want in the directory tree or enter the directory path in the corresponding field in the icon list.

If you have a jumble of miscellaneous file types rather than a purely images folder, you will be glad that PixiePlus has an option for displaying only directories and images. To do this, select the item *View/ Images and Folders only* in the menu list.

If you want to know more about these thumbnails, simply position the mouse over the image and after a short wait PixiePlus will then present you with a tool tip, in which you can find out everything worth knowing about the respective file: from the size to the file privileges.

Nor should you ignore the right mouse button, because the pop-up menu (Figure 4) allows you to do a whole series of things. With “Edit image...” you gain access to the Image Editor of the program. Although PixiePlus cannot yet keep up with the options of a purely image-processing software package like Gimp, with over 30 inbuilt effects it gives you a number of options without having to load up a separate program.

Also interesting is the option *Convert to...*, with which you can convert your images at the click of a mouse from one format to another. If they are animated GIFs, you should also try out the option *Play Animation*, so as to enjoy the animation at full size.

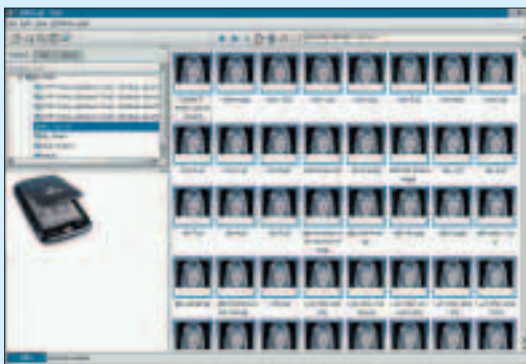


Figure 2: No preview for miles around

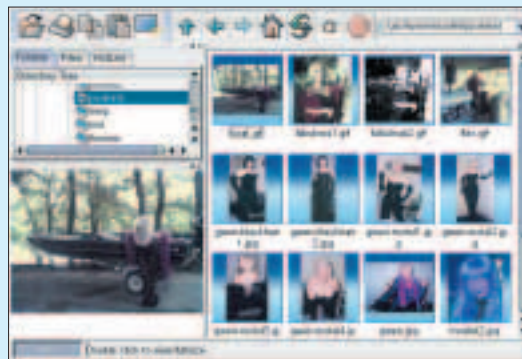


Figure 3: Preview images everywhere you look

The file list

The FileList contains all files you have loaded into PixiePlus or specified as command line arguments when starting the program. It is especially practical when you want to look at your images in full screen mode (*View/View images as.../Fullscreen*). You can then navigate through the loaded images via the back and forward buttons in the top left-hand corner of the screen.

If you want to store the latest file list, select *File/ Save FileList As* in the menu list. You will then be prompted to give the list a name, which you can then load later at any time via *File/Open FileList*.

The image list is also wonderfully well suited for an additional PixiePlus feature: the slideshow. To do this, select *File/ Slideshow...* from the menu list. You can then decide whether you want to enjoy a slideshow consisting of images from the FileList or from the current folder (Figure 5).

You can also define how many seconds should elapse between image changes, or whether you want to look at the whole sequence of images again immediately after it ends, by means of the Loop option. To stop a slideshow that’s underway, by the way, simply click at any point on your desktop.

What else PixiePlus can do?

When it comes to screenshots, PixiePlus won’t leave you in the lurch. With a couple of mouse clicks you can retain the current desktop or individual program windows for posterity. To do this, just select *File/ Take a Screenshot...* In the window that appears (Figure 6) you can decide whether you want to make a screenshot of the complete desktop (Grab the entire desktop) or of a specified window, which you can easily choose with a mouse click. With the field *Delay (in secs)*: you define how long you want to wait for PixiePlus to create the screenshot for you.

If you’d just like to take a quick look at an individual image, you may be put off by the idea of starting a fat program like PixiePlus with all its many features. Pixie developer Mosfet is one step ahead of you, and for this reason has equipped the program with command line options. A *pixie photo_of_your_choice*, entered in a terminal window is all it takes – the time-consuming browser and image editor of PixiePlus is then not loaded.

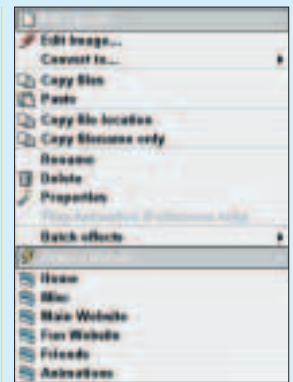


Figure 4: The pop-up menu has quite a bit to offer

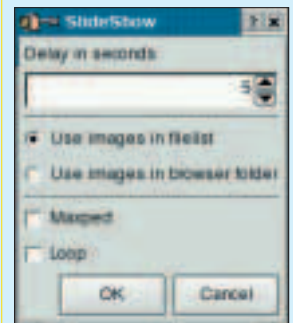


Figure 5: Put together your own personal slideshow!

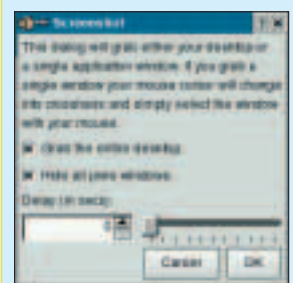


Figure 6: The screenshot section