

K-tools: Desktop add-ons

THAT SUMMER FEELING

Stefanie Teufel explains how to give your desktop a whole new lease of life with a range of KDE add-ons

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.

Themes The famous/infamous themes will surely be already familiar to many from the Windows world. These are background images, icons, sound files etc. that harmonise with each other, which some well-meaning person with varying degrees of good taste has compiled for your desktop.

By this point in the year it's not just our wardrobes that are being cleared of winter clutter, it seems that developers have been hard at work crafting new designs for the new season. That's the only explanation for the glut of new **themes**, wallpapers, screensavers and other eye candy now being released. In this issue of K-tools we shall present you with the most colourful of the new products.

Thematic

Cables, grasses, illuminated buildings or geese are all used by Troy Dawson to adorn his desktop. Anyone wanting to emulate him in this should install the eight new themes which are ready for download on his homepage at <http://home.fnal.gov/~dawson/themes/>. Handily enough, they come in the form of an rpm package, so that root merely has to perform the installation with the usual rpm command `rpm -i kdethemes-fermi-1.i386.rpm`, so that you can access the new kaleidoscope of colour.

Anyone who has got their eye on just one, very special, theme – such as the Fermi-Feynman theme from the heading image – can also get the corresponding `.ktheme` file individually at ftp://ftp.kde.com/Art_Music/Themes/Fermilab_Themes/. To beautify your desktop with it, open the KDE control centre and there select the item *Look & Feel/Theme management*. Now just click on the Add button, select the new theme, and straight away it's in the theme manager. Those who no longer like the

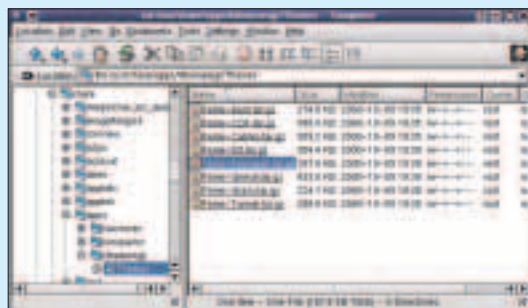


Figure 1: Which themes do you want?

pattern, by the way, can get rid of it just as easily with a click of the Remove button.

Changing the wallpaper

Anyone who wants to repaper their desktop instead of their home will be delighted with the zak-o-rama package – a wallpaper set for 1024x768 resolution. Like the themes from Fermilab, the wallpapers are also available singly (or as 3.9Mb **tarball**) at ftp://ftp.kde.com/Art_Music/Themes/Wallpapers/zak-o-rama/.

The individual **jpg** files are unpacked or copied into the KDE wallpaper folder. Where this is located depends on the directory in which you or your distribution have installed KDE. Under Red Hat, for example, the directory `/usr/share/wallpapers` is the destination of your copying action.

After that you can select the background images you've just installed in the usual manner (right-click



Figure 2: Change of wallpaper for the desktop background on the desktop and in the pop-up menu click on the item Configure Desktop). Then your desktop will look, for example, like that in Figure 2.

Stylish

Transparent menu bars, mouseover effects in the menu bars and an especially rich colour palette are offered by Mosfet's style scheme High Performance Liquid (Figure 3), which you will find at ftp://ftp.kde.com/Art_Music/Themes/High_Performanc

e_Liquid!. When doing the installation you really only need to ensure that `make -f Makefile.cvs` is set before the old familiar Linux three-step `.configure; make; make install`.

In order to fully appreciate the Liquid schemes, you should then select High Performance Liquid in the control centre under Appearances under each of the items Colours, Window decorations and Style. The transparency can be adapted to your own personal preferences by means of the newly-added item *Appearance/Translucent Menus*.

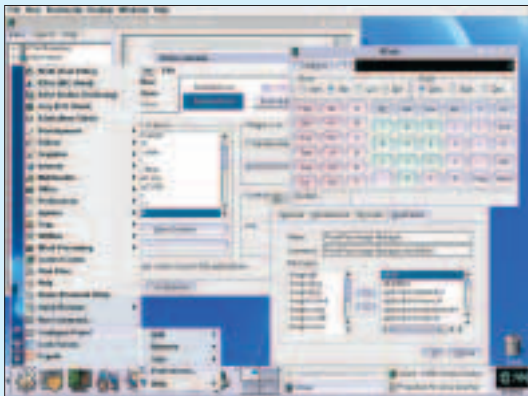


Figure 3: Counter fatigue with pastel colours on the desktop

House guests

There's also another new program around that will bring you some new living companions: AMOR MD 2, a variant of Amor, which may already be on your computer. If you decide on the MD2 edition of the *Amusing Misuse of Resources*, in future, instead of penguins, there will be Hangman Quake-2 characters dancing on the frame of your window and keeping you and the resources of your computer from working. The latest version of this gadget can be found at <http://www.2robots.com/amorMD/>.

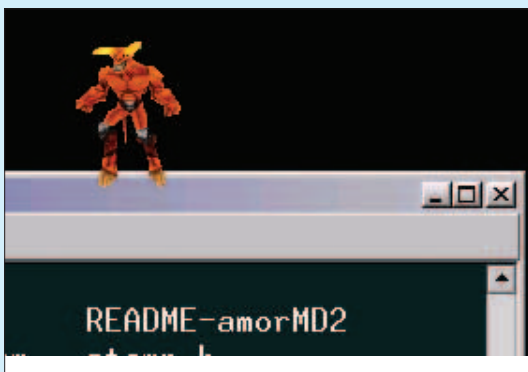


Figure 4: Worrying playmates

Saving

In addition to all the new wallpapers and themes, the screensaver designers didn't want to be left on the sidelines and have brought out three new screensavers. Saver Numero Uno from *Neil Stevens* can be found at the homepage of the author at

<http://freakde.org/neil/washuu/> and populates your screen in work-free periods with small crabs as in Figure 5.

With the second screensaver you can now start the countdown to your summer holidays. KountDown, available at

<http://w1.911.telia.com/~u91117365/kountdown.html>, counts down the time to a user-defined deadline.

The settings are defined by you in the setup dialog box from Figure 6. In addition to the deadline you can also adapt colours, font and background of graphical countdown as you desire.



Figure 5: A crab rarely comes alone

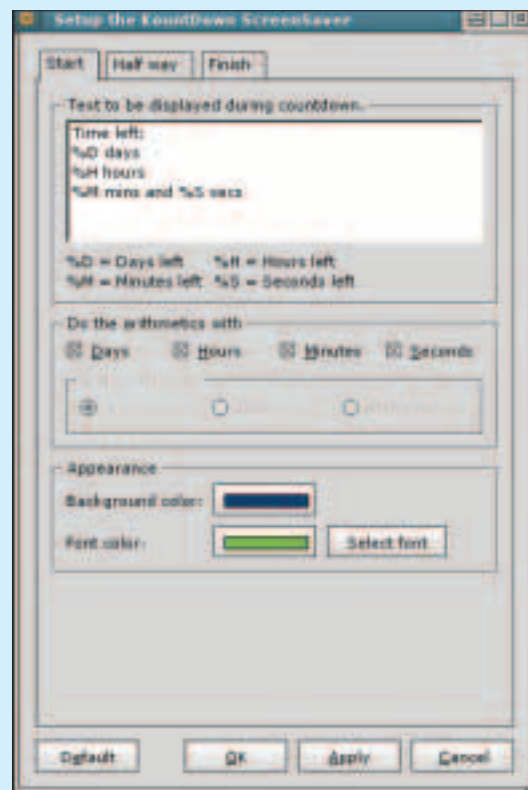


Figure 6: What date should it be?

Tarball The program `tar` is a common archiving tool under Unix. A collection of files packed together with it into one file is usually referred to as a tarball. It bears the file ending `.tar.gz` or `.tgz`, when it has first been combined using `tar` and then compressed with the program `gzip`.

jpg Widely-used graphical format with lossy compression. Especially interesting – particularly for Web designers – is its scalability, which can be adjusted by a compression factor. In exchange for very high compression one also gets compression artefacts. The more the image is compressed in size, the less accurately it is reproduced.

Info

AMOR

<http://homepage.powerup.com.au/~mjones/amor/>