KSame, KLines, KReversi, KShisen

Passing Time

While so many computers remain idle during the summer months, with the coming of fall, the computer nights will again become longer. The games from the KDE package prevent boredom from setting in on those long evenings. We take a look at some of the best known and most played.

BY STEFANIE TEUFEL

As the days become shorter and the temperatures drop, instead of spending your evenings in the great outdoors local, you might be tempted into spending more free time in front of the computer.

The games in the *kdegames* package guarantee many wonderful hours of fun on those long gray fall evenings. As not everyone has a room-mate or a friend as a playing partner, we decided to restrict our selection to single-player games, where the computer can act as a playing rival if needed.

Quickie

The first game on our list is a "boredom killer"; though simple, it is good for 5 minutes of entertainment, and this is just perfect if you are waiting for your computer to finish a task, or if you just want to kill some time until your favorite soap starts. Launch *KSame* and try to remove all the colored balls from the screen for a high-score.

The balls can be removed in one of several ways. If balls of the same color touch either vertically or horizontally, you can remove a group by clicking on one ball in that group. If you empty a column, then all of the columns to the right will slide to the left.
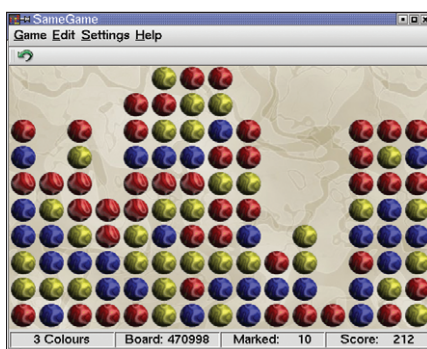

Figure 1: How do I get rid of the balls? A simple game to learn, but very addictive

The points are calculated as follows: subtract two from the number of balls in the group to be removed, then square the result. This may sound more complicated than it is, but let's say there are 7 balls in the group then 7-2 = 5, and 5 squared is 25. So you receive 25 points for removing 7 balls. Similarly, 36 points would be added to your score for removing 8 balls (8-2 = 6, 6 squared is 36).

The game ends when no more balls can be removed. The balls left on screen are deducted from your score. However, if you manage to remove all the balls, a bonus of 1000 points is added to your total score.

A small hint for the non-mathematicians; try to remove the largest possible groups; the larger the number, the more points you get.

Keep in Line

When you have had enough of that, and assuming you still have 5 minutes to kill with another ball game, then try *KLines* (see Figure 2). In this game, the idea is to move the balls between squares by click-

ing on them with the mouse, and by doing so, to build horizontal, vertical or diagonal lines of the same color. If you manage to line up five balls of the same color, they are removed from the board and your score increases.

After each move, the computer adds three new balls to the board. To the right of the board there is a box that displays a preview of the colors that will be added after the next move. If you want to cancel a move, simply click on the green arrow in the menu.

A Classic with a New Look

The KDE variant of the classic Tetris game is called *KSirtet* (see Figure 3). As with Tetris, the goal is to fill up the empty rows with falling objects – full rows are removed by the computer. Using the keyboard, you can rotate and move the objects from side to side at will.

The game is over when the objects run out of room to drop into; that is, when a column is filled to the top. After remov-
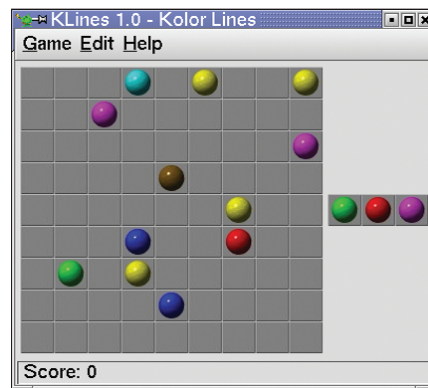

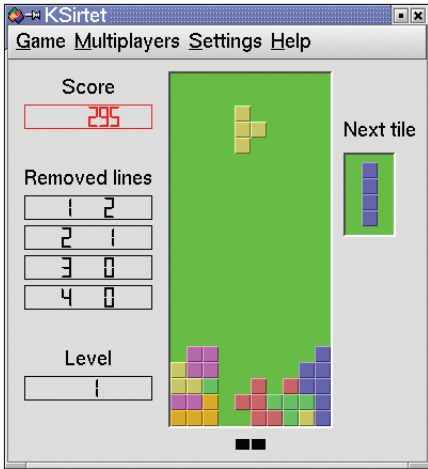**Figure 2: KLines rewards you for staying in line, but keep an eye on what is coming next**

Figure 3: Tetris with the KDE look and feel. Only experts can hope to achieve a four row Tetris

ing ten lines, you automatically move to the next level, where the objects drop at a faster rate.

But don't forget your score. You can increase your score fastest by removing more than one row at a time. You get 40 pts for one row, 100 pts for two rows, and 300 pts for three rows.

Four rows is called a "Tetris", and for this you receive the maximum number of points, 1200. KSirtet multiplies the awarded points by the game level, so if you get a "Tetris" at level ten, you are awarded 12000 points!

When the game is over, the scoreboard appears as in Figure 4. If you want to measure your skill against other players all over the world, simply click on *Top scores world-wide* – assuming you are online.

Irreversible?

Strategy is the keyword with *KReversi* (see Figure 5). Outsmart your computer! Your battlefield is a square board that is
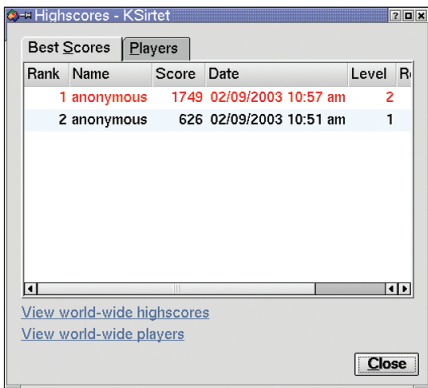

Figure 4: This result is a long way from being perfect. A few more games will see an improvement

divided up into 64 smaller squares, 8x8. Their is only one type of piece, and it is either red or blue. When you capture an opponent's piece or pieces, they are replaced by pieces of your own.

A move consists of "surrounding" an opponents piece(s) with your own. Just click on an empty square to place a piece. To "surround" your opponent, you must place a piece so that your opponent's pieces are blocked at both ends. Corner squares are strategically very important. Surrounding the opposition can be done vertically, horizontally or diagonally.

Two-by-Two

KShisen should look familiar to Mahjongg players, because it uses the same pieces and also has very similar rules. When you start to play, the entire board is filled with pieces. The object of the game is to remove all of the pieces by removing matching pairs.

To do so, simply click on two identical pieces that you want to remove. If they match red lines appear to indicate the match, and the computer will remove them. But watch out, the connecting line is not allowed to have more than two corners. The game is over when either the board has been cleared of pieces, or no more pieces can be removed.
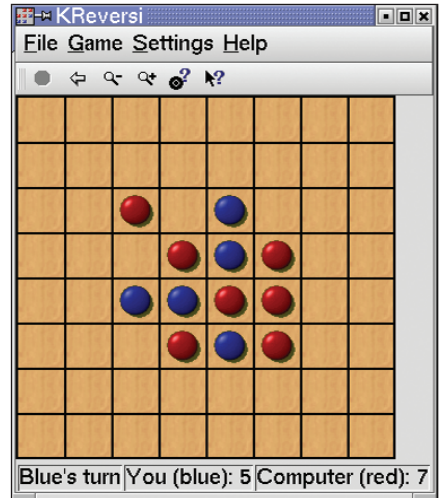

Figure 5: By cleverly placing your pieces, you can force your opponent into the corner

To make *KShisen* more challenging, the top players tend to change the size of the playing board with just a few clicks of the mouse. The game typically starts with a board size of 14 x 6 pieces, however, the *Settings/Board Size* menu allows you to increase the size up to 30 x 16 tile pieces.

The skill level can also be changed by selecting *Level* and changing the the *Speed* in the *Settings* menu. If a run of unsolvable games is driving you crazy, you can enable the *Settings/Solvable Games Only* entry. ◼
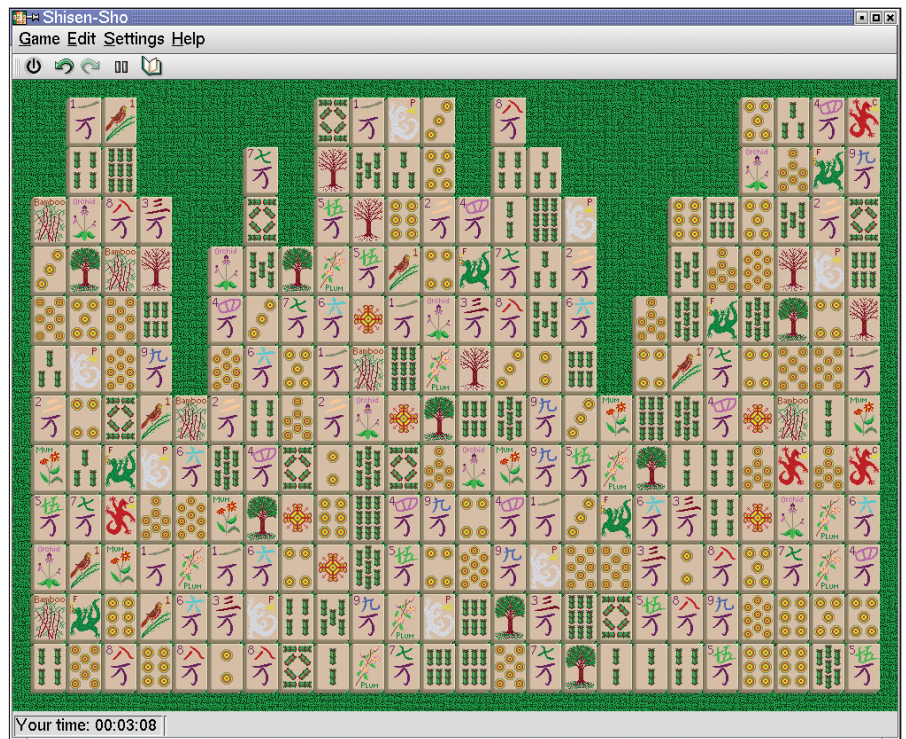

Figure 6: You will need a sharp eye to play this