Kaffeine

Music and Movie Time

Individual audio and video files, CDs, VCDs, and even DVDs – the Kaffeine player can handle whatever your heart desires, assuming your computer has the right codecs installed. Providing a simple clean interface makes the player very functional, so you can spend your time listening to and watching your files, rather than changing controls and settings.

BY STEFANIE TEUFEL

Today's computers with their high-end soundcards, DVD drives, and powerful CPUs are easily capable of replacing standalone DVD and CD players. All you need is some software support for the whole gamut of multimedia madness. *Kaffeine* by *Jürgen Kofler* is a particularly promising candidate to help with this role. The *Xine*-based [1] player can handle more or less anything you throw at it – CDs, DVDs, VCDs, or AVI, **MOV**, **WMV**, and MP3 files on disk. This all round talent can even play the multimedia streams straight off a broadband Internet without any fuss whatsoever.

The current version is available from the project site at *http://sourceforge.net/ projects/kaffeine*. To keep Kaffeine happy, you will need *xine-libs* version

1.0beta4 or newer. This package and its dependencies ensure that you have the required codecs in place.

If you cannot find a binary package for your distribution in the download section of the site, not to worry. Just follow the usual three steps *configure; make; make install* to compile Kaffeine yourself. The program also requires you to add the root directories for your KDE software to the *KDEDIRS* environment variable, for example:

```
export KDEDIRS=/opt/kde3:/usr/⏎
local/kde
```

If the automatic build insists on searching for *libfreetype.la* in the */usr/local/lib* directory, rather than in */usr/lib* where the file is located (and this is what happened on a Red Hat system), you can use a **symbolic link** as a quick workaround for this problem.

After installing Kaffeine, you can either launch it via the KDE menu entry, *Multimedia / Kaffeine (a xine-based Media Player.)*, or simply type the command, *kaffeine &* (adding the path if required). When you first launch Kaf-

feine, it asks you if you would like to use the plugin, *$KDEDIR/lib/kaffeineplugin/kaffeineplugin.so*, with Mozilla. And if you say yes, Kaffeine automatically links the plugin to *$HOME/.mozilla/plugins*.

Playlist

When you see the welcome screen waiting for files to play (as shown in Figure 1), you will also notice that a tiny CD icon has appeared in your menu bar. You can right click the icon to pop up the

Figure 1: Kaffeine saying "Hello"

Figure 2: The dropdown menu provides access to the major functions

Figure 3: Kaffeine can handle XMMS playlists

Figure 5: The interface provides transparent access to Xine options

menu shown in Figure 2. The menu provides controls for the player, allowing you to *Open File(s)*, or *Playlist*s.

Kaffeine can use M3U lists created by XMMS or other programs via *Playlist / File / Import* (see Figure 3). It even handles Noatun playlists, and PLS or ASX files without any complaint.

The quickest way to feed your player is to drag & drop a file onto the disc icon. You can even drag & drop multiple files to pass complete directories or playlists to Kaffeine.

Incidentally, you can specify a playlist or directory as a command line switch, as in:

```
kaffeine /your/mp3/directory
```

to tell Kaffeine to parse the files in this directory and add them to a playlist. The plugin also allows you to open multimedia files using Konqueror.

And Action... in Thumbnail or Full Screen Mode

Kaffeine can provide any image format, color, and size you might request. You can use the *View* menu to choose between *Fullscreen* and *Window mode*. If you tend to toggle between these two modes, simply use the keyboard short-
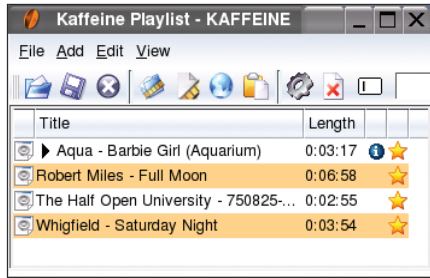
cut, [F]. The program hides the menu and control panel in *Minimal mode*, but you can still access the program via the dropdown that appears when you right click.

Some files (AVIs in particular) need *Deinterlace* to play correctly; select the menu item with this label to enable the feature. Thanks to the *Aspect ratio* feature you can use *auto* to view the file at its original size, or select an aspect ratio from *4:3*, *16:9*, and *1:1*. *Zoom in* (shortcut [Z]) zooms the video image up to 400 percent, *Zoom out* reverses this process and *Zoom off* switches the zoom feature off.

If you want to repeat a track endlessly, select *Play / Endless Mode*. You can also opt for a random playlist by selecting *Random*.

Apart from playing movies, Kaffeine also provides a snapshot facility that allows you to capture stills from your favorite scenes. You can access this feature via *File / Store snapshot*; snapshot
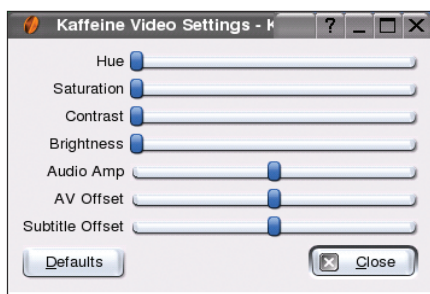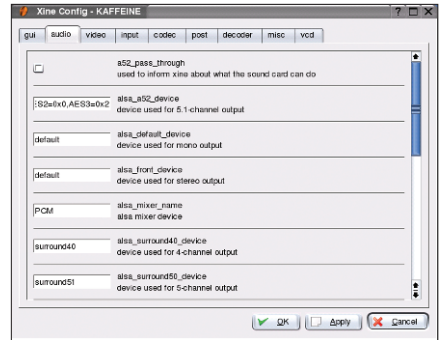

Figure 4: Slider controls provide more hue and contrast

images can be saved as PNG, BMP XMB files.

A Question of Preference

If the movie image is not quite to your liking, take a look at the *Video settings* (see Figure 4). You can use slider controls to change the *Hue, Saturation, Brightness* or *Contrast*. And if the soundtrack is not in sync with the image, simply change the "*Audio-Video*"-Offset.

If you have tried *Xine*, you are probably familiar with the configuration facilities that this program offers. Kaffeine provides a graphical user interface via *Settings / Configure Xine* (see Figure 5) that allows you to configure the player's parameters by pointing and clicking. If you change the audio or video drivers in this interface, you will need to relaunch the program to apply your changes.

Kaffeine not only has a convincing graphical user interface, but a plethora of useful command line switches. For example, the *--device* option allows you to specify the path to your audio or video CD, and even stipulate the input plugin. The following command:

```
kaffeine --device /dev/cdrom VCD
```

plays a video CD in the CD-ROM drive.

To add a track to your current playlist, simply pass the *--enqueue mytrack* option to Kaffeine, and the program will comply by adding the track. You can access AVI files with separate subtitle files from the command line as follows: *kaffeine film.avi subtitlefile.xxx*. ∎

GLOSSARY

MOV: *Short for "Movie", refers to video files in Apple's Quicktime format.*

WMV: *The "Windows Media Video" format is part of the Windows media architecture and competition for Quicktime.*

Symbolic link: *The command "ln -s path/to/file /newpath/newname" creates a link to the first file using the name in the*

second parameter, and typically at another location in the filesystem tree, without actually copying the file's content. Deleting the original file, leaves the link pointing at a black hole; this is referred to as a broken symlink.

$: *Shell variables such as HOME, KDEDIR, or KDEDIRS can be output, if you prefix a dollar sign to their names.*

INFO

[1] Xine video player: *http://xinehq.de/*