

Letters to the editor

Write access

■ Full Distro Test

I have a couple of comments to make on your "Full Distro Test" in Issue 39 / February. I am surprised that your reviewer did not mention the bugs and reliability problems with Mandrake 9.2, which led to me eventually removing it from my system. Namely:

- Font support is not very good. My preferred browser is Mozilla Firebird, and with that I found lines being pushed into the line above. Not good. I never had that problem with Suse, which despite trying many distros, I have always gone back to.
- The system twice went into a continual swap which paralyzed my system. I could only stop it by rebooting. (My system is a Compaq 450Mhz P3, which then had 128Mb of RAM.)
- The versions of both GNU Emacs and XEmacs are not well-configured. Mandrake GNU Emacs' default font is too small (unlike Suse's version), which is a real strain on the eyes if you use it in 1280x1024 mode rather than 1024x768. While XEmacs was set to automatically indent on the second line. I am sure there is some way of sorting this out, but surely a package should come properly configured?
- The modem dialing software simply doesn't work (I use a Speedtouch modem). I had to look up on Google how to start it, which involves doing "pppd call adsl" manually, as root. Suse allows you to start the internet connection as a common user, and is simply a case of starting KInetnet or QInetnet.

Also, I cannot let your comments about "free" and "commercial" distros in the Conclusion go without comment. Can people expect to have a free-beer distro without some rough edges? If people want to seriously use this software, they should be willing to pay for it. ■

M.J. Smith, New Malden, UK

■ More on Full Distro Test

I tested all distros myself but I just have to add some comments here:

Suse: I installed this great distro on 8 PCs/Laptops with all kind of CPU/hardware combinations without any problems. No problems with the sound-card either; un-mute after the initial boot was sometimes necessary. This distro is clearly my favorite!

Mandrake: Being a Mandrake club member and user myself for the last 2-years, I need to say that the latest edition 9.2 was a sheer nightmare:

- installing xemacs and emacs in parallel doesn't work or crashes your system.
- on a dual-boot system changing the default from Linux to Windows screws up your Linux completely
- might destroy your LG CD-ROM...
- menus disappear after installing additional programs

More people have encountered these or similar problems. ■

Peter Vogt, by email

■ Xandros Registration

I've installed Xandros from the ISOs on the latest DVD. A couple of problems, but nothing significant. However, I can't register with Xandros as I can't find a serial number/registration key anywhere. Can you help?

I shall not use Xandros for my main OS (I keep Debian for that), but I shall keep it as a 'learning tool' as it seems better than Knoppix for that purpose.

John Gennard, by email

LM We contacted Xandros about serial numbers for readers. Xandros responded by updating their registration page so that you can select "Magazine Covermounts" that will then allow you to avoid filling in the serial number field. ■



Please send your comments and suggestions to letters@linux-magazine.com

■ ISO Images

I notice your current edition, 39 February 2004, has a DVD exclusive. The inlay for the DVD states you need a CDRom or Floppy Drive as part of the minimum spec for Xandros Desktop 2.0.

Surely the DVD will not boot from a CDRom drive?

C Shearsby, by email

LM You are quite correct. A DVD will not boot from a CD-ROM drive. That is the specification that is the minimum for Xandros to run. The DVD contains the CD-ROM images of the Xandros system, supplied direct from Xandros. To make use of these images you will need to use a CD writer and burn the images to a CD-R or CD-RW disc. This image is then bootable from the CD drive that Xandros mentions.

We have just installed Xandros on some old hardware. The monitor was only capable of 800x640 and so we were forced to press the shift key at the start of the installation, so we could choose 256 colors. This then installed without a problem and correctly downloaded a security update from the Xandros network site.

The floppy drive is mentioned because, again, some hardware does not have a BIOS that will allow you to set the CD-ROM as a bootable device. In this case, you then have to make a bootable floppy diskette that accesses the rest of the files on the CD-ROM. ■

