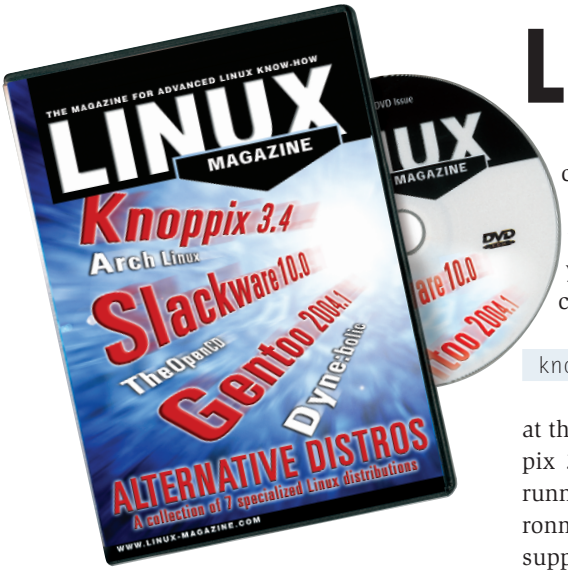

Linux Magazine DVD

At Linux Magazine we get many requests for particular Linux distributions. These are not the big four (Red Hat, Suse, Mandrake and Debian), but those that cater to the specific needs of many of the users.

With a DVD, we are able to have more than one distribution and so have included the latest versions of the most frequently requested systems. These range from the well known Slackware, which is a distribution that can claim one of the oldest histories, to the tiny Feather Linux designed to fit on a USB pen drive.

We start with the some very recently released distributions. Until its launch we had received few requests, but as soon as it was announced, it became the most popular request.

Knoppix 3.4

When originally launched, Knoppix shook up the Linux world. A live system that did not touch your hard disk and had so much functionality that everyone had to sit up and take notice. This version has not rested on its laurels, but continued to develop at a rapid pace.

By default the system will boot with the 2.4.26 Linux kernel, but you have the option when booting to choose the new 2.6.5 kernel. Type

```
knoppix26
```

at the boot prompt for this option. Knoppix 3.4 keeps up with functionality by running KDE 3.2.2 as your desktop environment with the new Gimp 2.0 (CMYK supported) as the image manipulation package of choice.

The hardware detection has been extended to feature WiFi cards and IrDA/Bluetooth configuration. Because it uses compression as you access the system, the filesystem is capable of having 2GBytes of applications and data.

Knoppix is fantastic for letting non-Linux users see the power of Linux (and giving other distros something to aspire to). Of course, you can install it onto a hard disk so it runs faster. With over 900 software packages including OpenOffice 1.1.1, we are sure you will find something that suits your needs.

Slackware 10.0

Slackware fans have been around for a long time. Ten years has given rise to a tradition of reliability, usability and security. This summer's new release is based on the GCC 3.3.4 compiler, it runs with the 2.4.26 kernel (both GCC 3.4.0 and the 2.6.7 kernel supporting udev are also available in /testing), KDE 3.2.3 and GNOME 2.6.1.

The system is expandable and easily upgradeable. Running X11R6.7.0 from X Org and Mozilla 1.7 as its Web browser and having both Cups and LPRng for printer support, we are sure fans and soon-to-be fans will agree that Slackware should be more widely used.

We must warn any user who is considering an installation of Slackware 10.0 about one of the serious consequences. Slackware is addictive, and users become very possessive about their favorite distribution.

Gentoo 2004.1

Gentoo is a fairly recent Linux distribution that is gaining ground with users who want a bit more from the standard distributions. Its strong features are the ability to optimize and customize applications. In doing so, a Gentoo box will run at the highest speed possible, because each application has been configured to make the most of your system rather than using default options designed for the majority.

Optimizing has meant that Gentoo has become the distribution of choice for extreme computing. Capable of showing off your latest hardware to the fullest.

Another strength of Gentoo is its Portage system. This acts as both a software distribution system for adding the latest build scripts, as well as a package building and installation tool for adding your own customized versions of applications.

Because it is designed around the cutting edge of technology, as expected, it has some of the latest features available.

These include excellent filesystem and hardware support. So much that the Linux Magazine staff has been

Why these distributions – and not XYZ?

Each of the distributions presented on the DVD is not a random collection, nor is it the complete list of requested distributions. We have based the compilation on the frequency of requests.

If your requested distribution is not here, then write in again and we will start collating results.

Figure 1: Slackware running Gnome, xmms and Xchat.

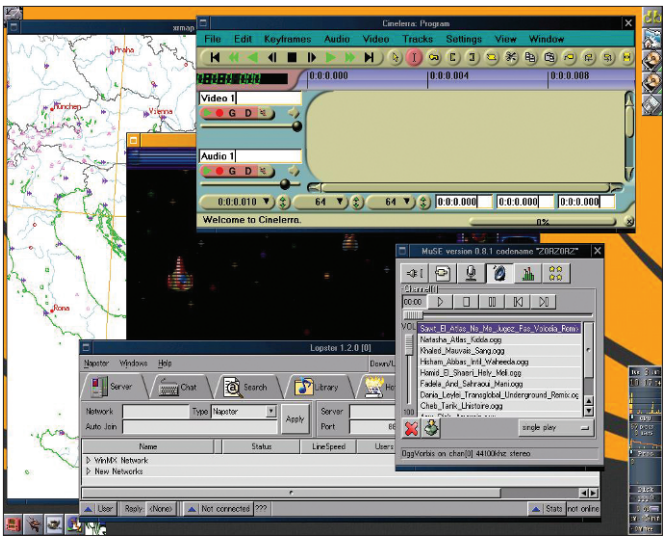

Figure 2: dyne:bolic, showing Cinelerra, MuSE and Lopster.

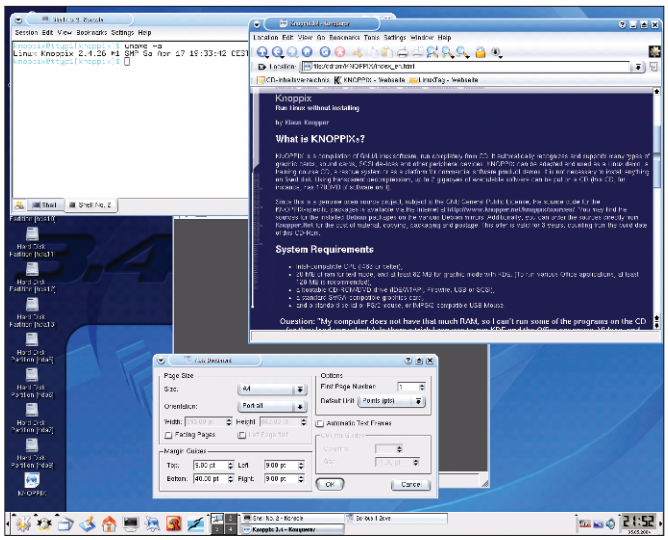

Figure 3: Knoppix 3.4, with Konqueror, Scribus and Konsole on show.

known to visit computer shows looking for the latest hardware, just to use it under Gentoo.

If extreme power, racing speed and its unique flexibility appeal to you, then we would encourage you to give the new Gentoo Linux a try.

TheOpenCD

We have been a little taken aback by the number of requests for this disc. It is not intended to run under Linux! It is for Windows users. While we would never encourage anyone to run such a poor choice of operating systems, your letters have indicated that it is popular in some areas. What this operating system really lacks is the knowledge and appreciation of Open Source. Rather than just telling a Windows user how good Open Source software is, TheOpenCD lets you actually show them that if they join the Free and Open Source Software movement, membership has benefits.

Burning ISO images

You can create the full CD discs by burning the appropriate ISO file to a blank CD in a CD writer. Under Linux you can find out what your writer is referred to by running

```
cdrecord -scanbus
```

This will then indicate the three figure code such as 0,1,0 or 0,2,3. You can then use this to point to the correct device.

```
cdrecord dev=n,n,n
/path/to/image.iso
```

an actual example would be drecord dev=0,0,0 /mnt/cdrom/knoppix/knoppix34.iso

The CD contains many programs designed to prove that Open Source is stable, professional and better than proprietary software. It includes OpenOffice.org, AbiWord, PDFCreator, The GIMP, Mozilla, PuTTY, Miranda IM, Audacity, Neverball, 7-Zip and a host of other software all chosen to prove that it is the best.

With this software you can gently introduce Windows users to the world of Open Source, before you unleash the full power of a Linux distribution onto them.

Arch Linux 0.6 Widget edition

To be honest, we had not heard about Arch Linux until the requests started to hit our servers. This was a shock, because it is designed for System Administrators.

Although it is a general purpose system, it is optimized for i686 processors. It has no configuration wizards to get in the way of you using and understanding just how a Linux system really works.

It uses the Pacman package manager to install packages with an easy to build system. This gives more control over the traditional RPMs where you simply click and run with whatever options they provide as default.

As such, it makes Arch Linux ideal for hardworking servers and professional workstations. Perfect for the competent Linux users and administrator.

dyne:bolic 1.3

Do you want a distribution that is not afraid to stand up and shout its beliefs about free software? dyne:bolic is designed to run from a CD drive, and is aimed at being a practical and useful tool for all forms of multimedia production. This can range from editing sound files to broadcasting video streams.

Rather than needing the latest, expensive computer, dyne:bolic can run on just a Pentium 1 with 64MBytes of RAM. Now it is time to take back control of those older systems and produce your own masterpiece.

It uses the WindowMaker window manager, and has Mp4Live to stream both audio and video mpeg4 data. Blender lets you produce 3D modeled images along with Gimp for the usual photo manipulation.

Audacity and ReZounds mean you can easily edit your audio clips and add special effects. Of course it is not just about sound and video. Email, Windows connectivity, IRC, word processing and network tools are all available for you to work with.

Feather 0.5.3

The final distribution is also the smallest. It is only 64MBytes in size. Do not let the small size put you off from trying this mighty wonder. It is designed to run off a business card CD or from a USB pen drive.

It is based on Knoppix, but with many of the seldom used and non vital applications removed to conserve precious space. What is included, however, is a huge selection of tools, utilities and applications to get just about any job done. ■