

K-tools: Noatun and Aviplayer

ROLL FILM

Do you fancy having Hollywood's dream factory exclusively on your Linux computer? As Stefanie Teufel explains, it's no longer just a dream thanks to Aviplayer and Noatun

Plug-in A program fragment which can be inserted ("plugged") into a larger program as an expansion. Aside from Noatun, both The Gimp and XMMS make use of plug-in technology.

Ogg Vorbis According to the definition from its developers, Ogg Vorbis is a completely Open, non-proprietary, licence and patent-free, compressed multi-purpose audio format of high quality, similar to MP3, which is still the better known format at present. Incidentally, the name "Vorbis" stems from a character in a Terry Pratchett novel.

There is now an abundance of MP3 players under KDE, but what can you do if your favourite song comes along not only acoustically, but also in the form of a multimedia video? In the days of DSL flat rates and diverse peer-to-peer systems (*Qtella*, is a suitable client, and we introduced it to you in Linux Magazine issue 16) this is by no means an unrealistic everyday situation.

Don't despair, just ask Noatun – or to put it better, crank it up. Behind the somewhat offbeat name hides the most popular KDE media playback system, which can, as standard, play the MP3 and WAV audio formats as well as the video format MPEG-1. Via so-called **plug-ins**, additional formats, such as **Ogg Vorbis**, can also be used. The media player is an integral part of the *kdemultimedia* package (Version 1.2.0 described here is part of KDE 2.2.1) and therefore does not have to be downloaded and installed separately. It's also very easy to start: either enter, in any terminal emulation of your choice, a simple *noatun & command*, or fire up the player by clicking in the KDE start menu (*Multimedia/Media playback*).

Noatun starts off with the so-called *Excellent Plugin* as its graphical user interface (Figure 1), since this interface displays the greatest similarity of all to other KDE applications. If this rather simple display is not to your taste, you may be glad to hear that Noatun also has lots of more tailored outfits to wear (as in Figure 2).

You can give Noatun a new appearance via the

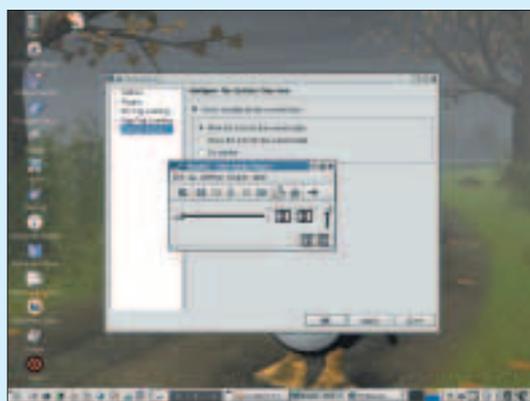


Figure 1: Not just for simple minds

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.



Figure 2: Noatun in the Kjofol look

menu item *Settings/ install Noatun*. In the window which will then appear, choose the item *Plugins / Interfaces* and there select the design of your choice by mouse click.

Once we are in the configuration environment, we immediately carry on with the *General Options*. On the tab of this name, which can be reached via the *Options* entry, specify that playback should start immediately when the player is started, or define how many Noatuns can run at the same time.

Behind the *Young Hickory* entry you'll find the configuration options for the system range of the KDE control bar. In the standard setting this is found on the left next to the clock. If you click with the right mouse button on the corresponding symbol (Figure 3), a small menu appears (Figure 4), with which you can in future operate your media player with ease. You can define, via the plug-in, which symbol should appear and whether or not you are interested in brief info about the respective current piece.

Not all plug-ins are loaded by default. If you

want to expand Noatun by additional set pieces, you can do so at any time via the item *Plugins/Additional plugins*. The plug-ins loaded later will then appear with further configuration options in the now-familiar settings menu. As soon as new plug-ins not included in the original package come out, you will find them at <http://noatun.kde.org/plugins.phtml>.



Figure 3: Noatun icon in the system panel

Patched up

Like every good media player, Noatun has a play or item list. Since Noatun requires at least a graphical user interface and an item list in order to function, every time you feel like a change you must load a new graphical user interface or a new playlist before you can delete the old one.

When you do so, a new item list automatically replaces the old one. At the same time you can display the respective current list in a separate window, if you select the menu item *Settings/Display item list* (Figure 5). The sequence of the pieces can then be changed very simply using drag and drop.



Figure 5: Piece by piece

If you have added the plug-in "Export playback lists in HTML", you can even transfer your item list into an HTML table. The installation page allows for the setting of colours, background image and activation of the paint-over mode, in which the colour of a link changes when a mouse pointer is run over it.

The equaliser, which you can access via the item *Settings/Equaliser*, allows the song being played to be manipulated with various sound-effects. There are already a variety of pre-assigned effects, which can be expanded as you like by your own settings. But there is no way to alter videos as yet.

Friends from Windows world

As **DivX** becomes more widespread on the Internet, the format also becomes of greater interest to us

Linux users. Unfortunately, Noatun is still flummoxed by playing DivX films at present, which is why we would like to introduce to you the Aviprovider, another multimedia player. You can find the latest version at <http://ftp.kde.com/Multimedia/Video/AviPlayer/> or on the (hard to reach) homepage of the team of authors Eugene Kuznetsov, Zdenek Kabelac & co. at <http://divx.euro.ru/>. Strictly speaking, this is an application and a library named *avifile*, which has been adapted for Linux.

The basic idea is to integrate Win32 binaries as plug-ins, in order to use these for playback. The *avifile* library makes it possible to play back the AVI codecs which run under Windows, under Linux as well. At the same time the application does not restrict itself solely to the available AVI codecs, but also supports other formats such as Microsoft's MPEG-4 or Motion JPEG. You are best downloading the necessary files from <http://www.linuxberg.cz/files/binaries-010122.zip>. The authors do offer a download option from their site, but because of technical problems the download usually crashes halfway through if you use this route.

Once you have obtained the necessary packages, you have to create, as root, a "win32" directory, using the command `mkdir /usr/lib/win32`. Then unpack the codecs with an `unzip binaries-010122.zip -d /usr/lib/win32` into the freshly-created directory, and install your Aviprovider using the Linux three-step `./configure; make; make install`. Done.

By entering `aviprovider filename.avi` you can now immediately fire up the film you want. A simple `aviprovider` allows you, as an alternative, to click forwards in a dialogue window, to your favourite video file. Whichever way in you choose, you will always be rewarded with a playback window like the one in Figure 6. If you prefer full screen mode, you can toggle between postage stamp size and full screen at any time with the Esc key.

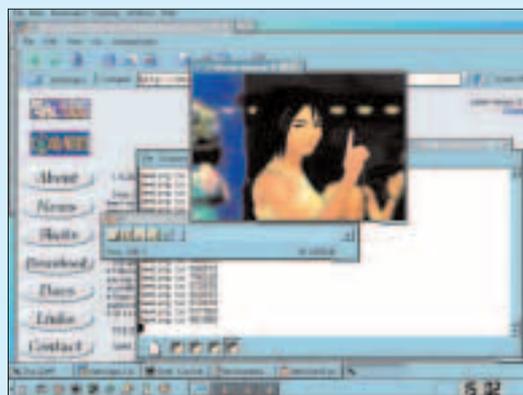


Figure 6: Linux is DivX-capable, too



Figure 4: Complete control

DivX This video codec is based on the MPEG-4 compression format released by the "Moving Picture Experts Group". Compared with previous standards MPEG-1/2, MPEG-4 needs only a fraction of the memory capacity, in order to attain a satisfactory image quality. If one takes it quite literally, the DivX format does not represent a modification of the MPEG-4 format, but a hack of the MPEG-4-based ASF format from Microsoft. The MPEG-4 codec has been further developed by Microsoft and is based on MPEG-2 technology. However, the bit rate of the individual frames is increased considerably by the strongest possible compression, so that the files remain very small, despite being of top quality.