

A reason to celebrate

# SuSE 8.0

The new release of SuSE 8.0 has finally arrived to the great relief of the developers involved and to the excitement of the end users and SuSE fans alike.

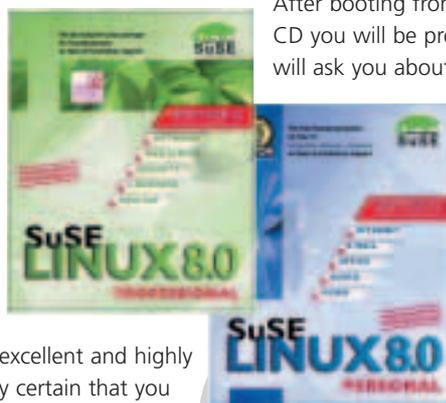
Richard Ibbotson gives us a hands-on view of the new distro

SuSE has introduced some major new innovations into its Professional and Personal versions of SuSE 8.0, which means that it's well worth having a look at it. From when you first open up their glossy and well thought out manuals to the finish when you begin to click on the mouse and ooh and ah at the excellent and highly stable desktop you can be fairly certain that you are onto a good thing.

The desktop users have got the latest and greatest in the shape of KDE 3.0, GNOME 1.4, XFCE 3.8, Windowmaker 0.80.0 and Enlightenment, as well as several other minimalist and lightweight desktops. You can also mix and match these to great effect and make any or all of them suit your own personal tastes. There are many universities and Government departments out there using these desktops to good effect. In recent times there are even commercial organisations using the Linux desktops rather than other products.

## Installation

If you do need to dual boot a Linux partition with a Windows one, then that's very easy to configure at the time that you run the SuSE Linux installation.



After booting from the floppy boot disk or the first CD you will be presented with several screens that will ask you about resizing your Windows partition.

You are not committed to the final size of the partition until you are presented with a screen that will tell you that your partition will be re-sized. The installation process has been simplified quite a bit, whether it's for the straightforward SuSE Linux installation or whether you do in fact need a dual boot machine.

After placing the first CD in the computer, the installer will check all of the hardware on your system and find things like CD-RWs or LS120 drives, as well as floppy drives and all of your other hardware. It will then take you through an easy to understand graphical installation process, which will ask you questions and give you a few choices about what it is that you want to do with your newly installed machine. Boot configuration is sorted out for you for the next time you start the machine. The Xwindows configuration should be a trivial part of the installation process.

Providing your graphics card and monitor are not much more than two years old everything should be fine, though many people have found that older hardware works just as well. If you do have problems consult people on one of the many LUG discussion



SuSE 8.0 welcome screen



Taking control of multimedia

lists or ask for some help from the SuSE support department. Basic configuration is part of the 60 or 90-day support scheme, which comes with every box of the software. The test machine that was used with the SuSE 8.0 software presented no problems at all for automatic configuration of a workstation and that was with a very much out of date Belinea monitor which would probably look much better sitting on a scrap heap than on a test bench.

## Applications

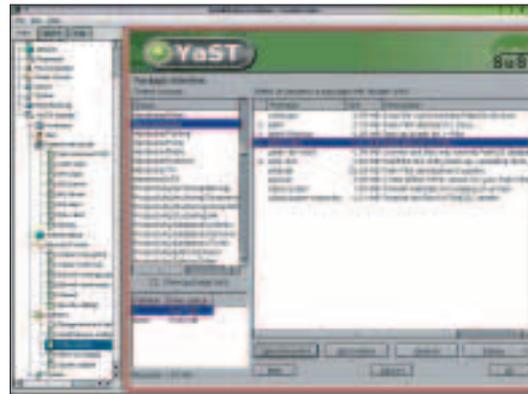
As is always the case, SuSE Linux does have a great choice of desktop applications. This includes many feature-rich wordprocessors, all of them Free, as well as organisers, email applications and a bewildering array of Web browsers, which quite simply leave the Microsoft stuff firmly in the last century.

OpenOffice.org has now been included into the SuSE distribution. In time it will probably replace the present Star Office 5.2 due to the licensing conditions that affect Star Office 6.0. Other word processors are of course present, such as Kword 1.1.1. This can save in a variety of formats such as RTF, Abiword and one or two others. If you're a Palm Pilot or Handspring fan then you might like to have a look at the latest version of Abiword. Not only does it do your normal run of the mill MS Word documents but it will also handle HTML and TeX and most important of all it will save with the Palm extension on any document so that you can use Jpilot or Kpilot to transfer your documents over to your PDA for the next day's business or pleasure. There is a free version of Abiword for Windows that you can download from the Net.

There's also all of the expected Postscript and PDF utilities that will enable to you to produce those top class documents that people look at more than once. It's great to know that Postscript is still used and will be in use for a long time to come. You can use the above for Web pages or, if you aren't a highly trained TeX person, you can use something like Mozilla Composer to write a graphical Web page and then finish off with Quanta+ by hacking the code. There are other HTML authoring tools on the CDs – it's best to have a look at them to find out what's there.

## Internet tools

The wonderful array of text processing tools is backed up by the Internet-based tools. The Web browsers that are included are Mozilla 0.98 which also has Mozilla mail and Mozilla Composer for producing Web pages; Opera, which is small and light when compared with the others; Konqueror which is very popular just now; Galeon for the GNOME fans and several others. If you are a bit old fashioned then you can always use Netscape and Netscape mail. Speaking of mail applications. If you are a Eudora or Outlook person and you can't cope



YaST2 for your PDA

**SuSE Linux does have a great choice of desktop applications**

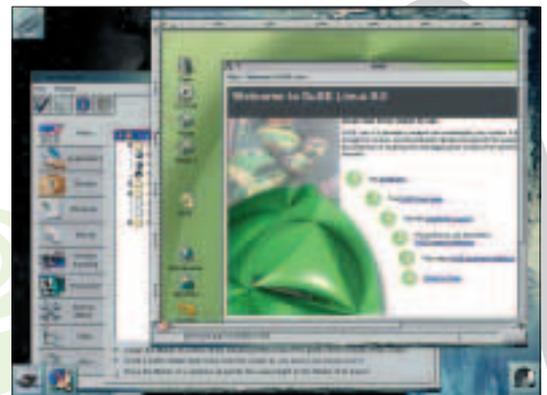
with anything else you are in for a few surprises with the new desktops that are around just now. Kmail is probably a good replacement for Eudora. Evolution 1.0.2 – that long-promised Outlook clone and PIM – is also now a part of SuSE 8.0. Other mailers that you can use include Balsa and Spruce, which are GUI-based applications that are easy to use. If you are a traditional Unix user you can of course use something like Pine or Mutt to do all of those things that you would have done on another platform.

The development tools are all there for the aspiring programmer or hacker, who wants to either develop some software or just experiment with some ideas that might not work out. Tools like automake and the GCC compiler are present. There is also the IBM Java development tools and C++ compilers and many other tools. Glade and Anjuta provide for GNOME development on the desktop and Kdevelop for the KDE people. There is also a free version of Kylix for anyone who wants to risk such an adventure.

For the purposes of leisure, or perhaps even for day-to-day use at work, there are tools for digital photography or listening to music or mixing it at the time of recording or you can watch your favourite DVDs or TV programmes on your computer. Listening to music from CD or MP3 is something of a joy when using Alsa sound tools and a good set of speakers.

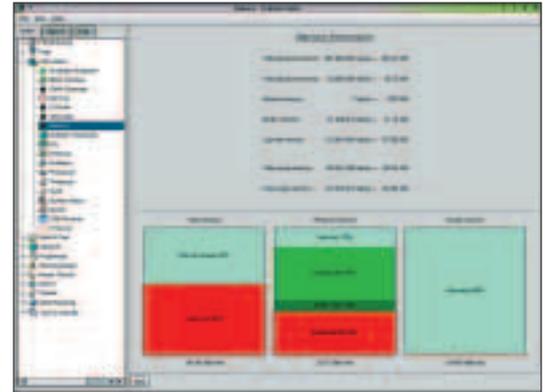
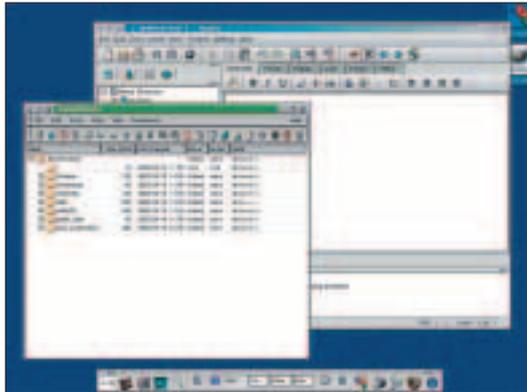
## Server-side up

If you want a server rather than a desktop workstation or notebook installation then SuSE Linux does have NFS and NIS server software built in, as well as DNS software and the various bits and pieces of security software that are normally associated with servers. If you want a Samba server, version 2.23a is the one that comes with the CDs. This will allow you to set up shares on a Linux computer so that it servers files to a local network or to a remote



WindowMaker desktop

XFCE running



Get hold of the SuSE 8.0 Professional version

network with SSL security protocols. This gives you a rock solid server that your MS Windows computers can connect to.

For a reliable mail server that also has a spam filter and virus scanner, you'll need to get hold of the SuSE 8.0 Professional version, which can build a mail server with an MTA such as Sendmail or Postfix. Both of these are well understood and they also come with a virus scanner (Amavis) built-in. If you don't want to use Amavis there are many other Linux-based virus scanners out there, such as Sophos or the Trendmicro ones that you will have to pay for.

There are many thousands of Apache Web servers out there on the Net, all of which are maintained by an army of technicians and system administrators. The SuSE distribution has a wealth of information about Apache and how to configure it. There is also a good choice of Apache modules and plenty of support for this application can be found from the SuSE list and through pay for professional services. The Apache configuration tool, Comanche, is also included.

### In a nutshell

The kernel people out there might want to know about the new 2.4.18 kernel that is a part of the 8.0 release. The usual selection of SuSE standard kernels for i386, i586/i686 uniprocessor and SMP (Symmetrical Multi-Processor) has been added to, with the first time inclusion of an nVidia kernel. This means that you have a great choice of PC hardware to run. Alpha and Sparc versions will come along later. You can still re-compile your kernel for your own requirements to improve the performance of your computer if that is what is required.

YaST2, which has now replaced YaST1, performs package management and system updates, as well changes in configuration. YaST Update Online will allow you to manually or automatically connect to a SuSE server so that your machine can check for and download updates. There are quite a few system administrators out there who like to know what it is that is being installed into their computers on their networks. The manual update will allow you to say yes or no to a package before accepting that the

### Memory info from the control centre

package is what you want to install. If you are also a Debian GNU/Linux fan you might prefer apt-get? If that's the case you can use apt4rpm to get hold of your updates.

### Net configuration

Configuring your Net connection, whether it's at home or in a commercial or Government environment, is well catered for. YaST2 can be used in console mode without Xwindows, so that you can take advantage of command line configuration and use YaST2 to help you with the difficult parts such as configuring an ISDN card or ADSL connection. ADSL is best configured with a cable modem through the Ethernet interface. You can also configure and use the BT Alcatel USB modems after recompiling the kernel and installing the Benoit Papillault software from the Net, which is available from Sourceforge. The SuSE firewall is included in the Professional version.

You can use the SuSE security list to ask questions about things like how to configure */etc/hosts.deny* or which parameters to put into the firewall when you set it up. There is also the personal firewall, which you might want to use on a notebook when you are travelling. For home use on a dial-up connection you should use the full version of the firewall so that you can find out with logged messages just who it is that is having a go at your systems. In present day circumstances this is no longer a joke and you should take notice of this.

### Conclusion

If there is something that hasn't been mentioned above then it's because there isn't enough room to explain all of it here. If you have a specific need or wish then you should find that the SuSE 8.0 release will have already identified your problems and sorted them out. The Professional version comes to you in a well-presented box with a very full set of manuals. You get seven CDs and one DVD, which contains all of the software that is on the other CDs and a good bit more as well. The Personal version costs less but has everything that you might need for your own workstation to write letters and to send faxes.

#### SuSE 8.0

Supplier	SuSE
Price	To be confirmed
Web	<a href="http://www.suse.co.uk">http://www.suse.co.uk</a>
For	All-inclusive
Against	No YaST1 included

rating