

Get the perfect desktop

Desktop paradise

Had it with Human? Bored with blue? Let **Graham Morrison**, our resident aesthete, guide you to form and function on the Linux desktop.



We all spend a great deal of time at the Linux desktop. It's our office, living room and games room rolled into one. And like those rooms, the experience is a

lot more pleasant when you've made your environment more comfortable and more tuned to the way you work. It's the virtual equivalent to moving the sofa in front of the telly, putting beer in the fridge and lighting a few candles.

It might sound strange, but your desktop is an expression of who you are, and how we use computers. That's why the internet is littered with people who post images of their desktop, even going to the trouble of designing their own icon sets and building

the applications that let you change everything in the first place. Some changes are purely for decoration – a background image or colour scheme, for instance. But there are others that reflect your working routine, such as application icons in the toolbar and the keyboard shortcuts for launching them, and even the font sizes and window position.

Over the next few pages, we're going to cover the main areas on the desktop where small changes yield big results, and cover the main desktops most of us enjoy using. We hope you'll be inspired enough to make a few changes yourself.

“We're going to cover the areas where small changes yield big results.”

Under the microscope:



Xfce

It's often overlooked, but this is a desktop environment you can truly make your mark on.



Gnome

Turn Gnome into the equivalent of a nice soft cushion with options you never knew existed.



KDE

Forget blue, change the colours around and banish all thoughts of 'kool' from your head.



Compiz

The icing on the cake. *Compiz* can make any desktop look better, and it's not all for show.



› Boring old KDE. Don't worry, we're going to make it all better.



Xfce

Start from the ground up with a desktop manager that makes no assumptions about how you want to use your computer.

Distros often ignore *Xfce* in the clamour to get hold of the latest version of KDE and Gnome, but for desktop modification, *Xfce* is the best place to start. This is because the default *Xfce* desktop is a blank canvas. This can put people off, as their first glimpse of the desktop is likely to give the impression of a Spartan and unloved one. But behind the scenes, *Xfce* is one of the most modifiable Linux desktops available, easily capable of looking like Gnome or KDE should you so wish. You just need to spend a bit of time with it.

Seeds of change

The place to start is the small star-shaped icon on the desktop. This is the Xfce Panel, and is just like the panels on other desktops. The only difference here is that there are no icons installed by default. To remedy this, right-click on the icon and select 'Add New Item'. A window will open listing all the available panel applications. You might want to add 'Clock', for example, so you can see the time. Another good choice is the 'Icon Box' applet, as this will display an icon for all the minimised applications on your desktop. The Desktop Pager helps you see which desktop you're on, and you will always be able to switch between desktops using the Ctrl+Function key combination. Before long you'll be able to recreate exactly the same panel you might be used to on another desktop. You can even load Gnome applets with the *XfApplet*, and there are other, more creative choices, such as the embedded command line known as *Verve* or the *Smart Bookmark* applet. You can create links to your favourite applications with the Launcher icon, and you can change the appearance of the panel with a right-click and selecting Customise Panel. From the resulting window, you can change its size as well as which border of the screen the panel is attached to. Click and drag the panel edges to move the panel around your desktop.

The main window into the world of *Xfce* is the right-click menu. It's from here that you can launch the usual array of Linux applications, as well as access the Xfce Settings Manager, which



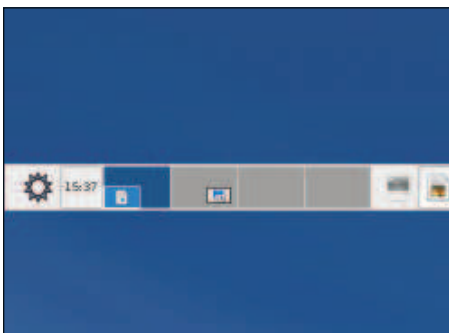
can be started from the top 'Settings' menu option. From this window, you get access to the usual array of options you use to change the look and feel of the desktop.

On the menu

The User Interface icon is the most interesting of these options, as this opens a window from where you can change the widget set used when windows are drawn on the desktop. You can switch between themes, icon sets and fonts, completely altering the appearance of the desktop. You might also want to change the Desktop Preferences, as this lets you use your own image for the background, or use a gradient between one colour and the next. The Window Manager control panel is also useful. From here you can change how each window on the desktop is decorated, as well as the order of the icons used in the window border for maximising/minimising and moving the window around.

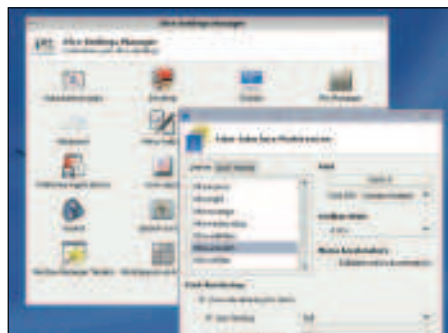
» **Compiz can be used to make any desktop environment look modern, and things are no different with Xfce.**

Three top tips: Xfce



1 Panel up

Start by adding a few extra functions to the panel. This will help *Xfce* feel more like a desktop you're used to.



2 Themes

Change the bare default theme to something more interesting. There are even themes that look exactly like a typical *Qt 4* application.



3 Backdrop

Use either a background gradient or an image for your desktop, to balance the default flat colour used by many distributions.





Gimping Gnome

There's no place like Gnome.

It's fair to say that Gnome, as installed by default with most distributions, takes a more reserved approach to desktop modification potential than KDE. It usually features a streamlined user interface, with far fewer points of entry than the default KDE desktop.

You also find two panels – a task manager on the bottom of the screen, and a menu option on the top border – much like the one you find on the OS X desktop. If you don't like this approach, you can remove one of them by right-clicking and selecting 'Remove', but we rather like the use of two panels. For some reason, the top panel, with its clock and Places menu, seems to fit well with the Gnome philosophy, and there's more than enough screen space on a modern display to have both panels enabled.

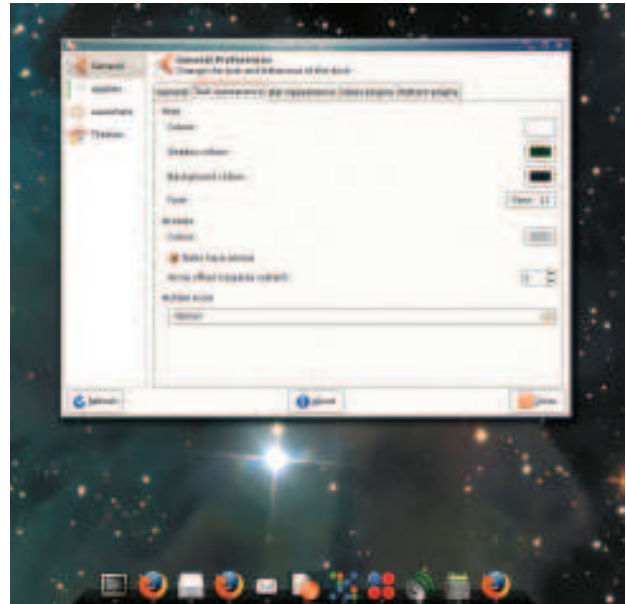
Smashing icons

Too many default themes use burnt sienna and orange (or whatever Ubuntu is calling it these days). You can alter the entire desktop by simply switching the colour scheme to use blue or green. Changes like these are made from Gnome's Appearance config panel (System > Preferences). The default page lists the installed themes. These are simply desktop decoration, icons and colour selections packaged into a single element that you can switch between quickly. You can edit any of these packages by clicking on the 'Customise' button, which will open a window from where you can choose your own combination of each element.

But the best thing about the Gnome Appearance window is its use of drag and drop. You can add new elements and themes by downloading a package and dropping it into the Appearance window. The element will automatically be installed and activated, and a new 'Custom' theme added to the list. This is a duplicate of the currently running theme with the new element inserted into it. For example, if

› Gnome's Appearance window is drag-and-drop enabled, so it's child's play to use.

“AWN makes the perfect replacement for Gnome's lower task manager.”



› Gnome's *Avant Window Navigator* is the best implementation of an OS X-like Dock we've seen on the Linux desktop, and a perfect replacement for the lower panel in Gnome.

you download a new icon set from www.gnome-look.org and drag the resulting tarball into the appearance window, the new icon set will be added to the available list and activated automatically. This makes it very easy to try out new themes, and it's the best way to make the desktop your own.

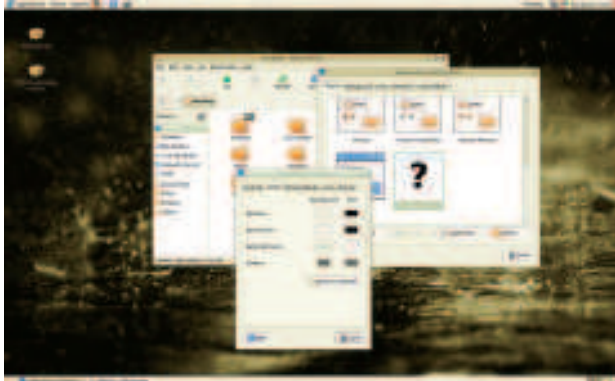
Docking applications

Gnome has a couple of excellent dock widgets to replace the lower task panel. The easiest to use, and install, is called *SimDock*. When run from the Accessories menu, it will attach itself to the lower edge of your screen, complete with scaled icons that represent any currently running applications. Right-click on the panel to add your own application shortcuts. But *SimDock* is also a little crude. It grabs a bitmap version of the backdrop as uses this as the image background, with the result that it doesn't always line up with the background image. Fortunately, there's a better solution. The *Avant Window Navigator* (AWN) is the closest experience us Linux users can get to Apple's Dock, and it even surpasses it in certain areas. The only downside is that AWN needs to use a compositing manager to blend the backgrounds and reflections on to the display in real time. This means you need to be running *Compiz* for it to work, but it's worth the extra hassle – especially if you're going to run *Compiz* anyway.

AWN also makes the perfect replacement for Gnome's lower task manager (at the bottom of the screen), because it duplicates the functionality and uses less space. When run for the first time, it displays icons for each running application on your desktop. You can see the preferences window by running the *awn-manager* tool, or by right-clicking on the toolbar itself. From the preferences window, you can add links to new applications, as well as change the look and feel of the toolbar. We thought the '3D Turn' effect looked excellent, although it has a tendency to suck up CPU resources when you drag the mouse cursor across the toolbar.



Get the perfect desktop



» Here's our own 'Mushy Pea' theme, using custom icons and colour palette (let us know if you'd like us to make it available).

To add some serious functionality to your Gnome desktop, you need to look at adding applets. These are the small, self-contained applications that add certain functions without burdening your system with a full-blown application, and there are two broad types. The first are panel applets, and these can only be added to the Gnome panel (the bar at the top or bottom of the screen). The second type of applet live on your desktop background, and are very similar in function to Apple's Dashboard widgets. In Gnome, these are called GDesklets.

Widgety grub

Before you get started, it's a good idea to trawl through your distro's package manager and install any applets that take your fancy. This is because you often can't tell what a particular applet does until you've gone to the trouble of running it. To add a panel applet, right-click on the panel and select 'Add to Panel'. As with KDE, this will open a window that lists all the installed Gnome-compatible applets. Our favourites include the following:

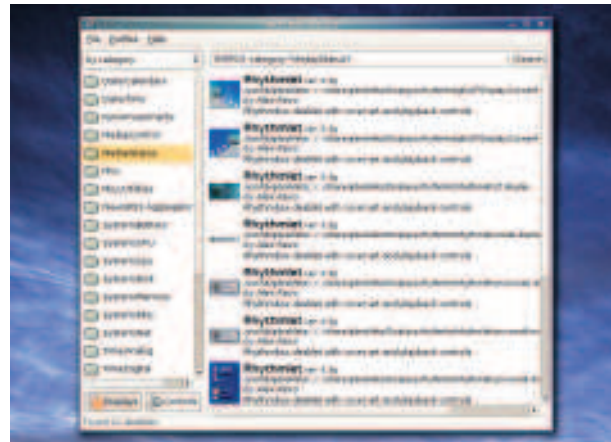
- » **System Monitor** A horizontally scrolling histogram of CPU/Memory/Disk/Network usage. Right-click to open a preferences window from where you can change the colour of each component.
- » **Desktop Drapes** Tell the Drapes configuration panel where you store your desktop wallpapers, and it will automatically switch between them every 15 minutes (by default).
- » **Drawer** This is a secret repository for further applets that are hidden away behind the drawer icon. It's a good place to hide any guilty pleasures, such as the 'Eyes' or 'Fish' applets.

» **Dictionary Look up** And if your vocabulary ain't too good, type a word into this text field and the widget will grab its definition from definition from the free version of the Webster's online English dictionary.

GDesklets

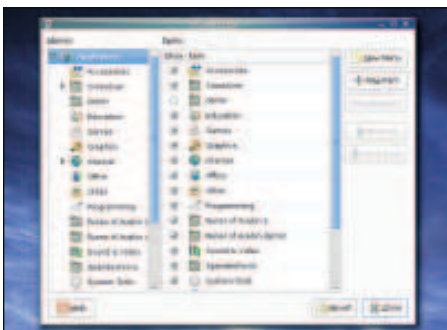
Toolbar applets are good for small tasks, such as providing the time or date, but they're not much good when you need more space. The solution is something that the developers have christened a GDesklet. It's an applet that sits on your desktop background, much like *SuperKaramba* and Plasma in KDE, and Dashboard widgets in OS X. It's not part of the default Gnome desktop, which means it needs to be installed separately and run from Gnome's Applications > Accessories menu. A small icon will appear in the toolbar applet area of your display, and you can add new widgets to your desktop by right-clicking on this and selecting 'Manage Desklets'. A window will appear with a category list in the left panel, selecting one of these will populate the GDesklet list on the right-hand side.

Many different applets are included by default, including calendars, resource managers, temperature sensors and various quotes of the day. Double-click on the one you want, and the applet attaches itself to your mouse pointer. It's then just a case of dragging the applet to the position you want it to occupy on the desktop. Applets are locked to their positions, but you can move them by using their right-click menu, or by holding down the left Alt key and click dragging the applet. As with most aspects of desktop modification, the best approach is normally trial and error. »



» GDesklets are like KDE's *SuperKaramba* applets, and there's a bewildering array of options to choose from.

Three top tips: Gnome



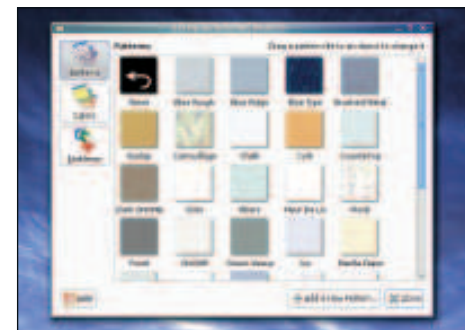
1 Prune the menu

It doesn't take long for the apps menu to get bloated. Cull the ones you don't use via System > Preferences > Main Menu.



2 Wallpapers

There are many websites you can use for wallpaper inspiration, but our favourites are NASA and the National Geographic.



3 Backgrounds & emblems

One little-used feature of Gnome's file manager is its ability to mark certain files with emblems, and change the browsing background image.



KDE gets cool

Beauty is only be skin deep, but what happens if you don't like blue?

KDE could be considered the most prosaic of all the common desktop environments. Just take a look at it the screen when you've finished a fresh installation. There's a standard panel, somewhat datedly stretched across the entire lower border of the screen. An applications menu lives in the bottom-left corner, in just the same place it's been for over a decade. And depending on the distribution you've chosen, the applications listed in the menu take on a messy ad hoc order that can make it very difficult to track down the tool you're looking for.

This approach hasn't made KDE many new friends over the last few years, and even KDE 4 hasn't changed the default look a great deal. The trouble is that many long-term KDE users have carefully crafted a configuration that they created a long time ago. They simply migrate these settings from one installation to another, and seldom experience a vanilla KDE installation. This is because almost every single setting, for every single KDE application, resides within a single directory in your home folder. This folder is `.kde`, a partial mirror of a directory usually found in `/usr/share/kde`. If a setting exists locally, it supersedes the one in the global directory – and that's how you copy your settings from one installation to another.

Look and feel

If you want to change the look and feel of your KDE desktop, you need to open KDE's System Settings panel. This particular window is a cornucopia of configuration options, but we need to look past the distractions and go to the 'Look and Feel' section. This is where you change things like the colour palette, fonts and styles used to render KDE windows, and it's all self-explanatory. Our pick of the best options include switching to the 'Klear looks' style, which emulates the classic Gnome look with a similar name, and using the Plastik window decorator – the least offensive of the options available. Changing the colour scheme can also help, but with KDE's icon themes mostly geared towards the use of blue, it's



› Changing the widget style in KDE alters the way that various windows components are rendered. You can see a preview as you switch between each style in the Control Centre.

difficult to find a different scheme that doesn't clash with the toolbar or your desktop icons. You can easily switch icons of course, but the Crystal set are by far the best in our opinion, unless you're using KDE 4, in which case the default Oxygen set is an improvement over Crystal. You can even install the Oxygen icons on a KDE 3 desktop. Just download the package from www.kde-look.org, switch to the Icons page in the Appearance window in System Setting, and select the downloaded tarball. KDE will install the icons into your local KDE directory, and they can be activated from the same Icon page window, although you'll need to restart the KDE desktop to see the full effect.

Panelling

Another feature of the KDE desktop that often lies neglected is the KDE Panel, the flexibility of which means that you can bend it to almost any task you may wish. The most common addition is a Panel Applet. These are the small, functional icons that run quietly in the corner of your screen. The clock is one, for example, but the default settings are a little crass. You can quickly create a much more aesthetically pleasing clock by right-clicking on the applet and selecting 'Configure Clock'. Try changing the type to 'Plain Clock', enabling the frame and changing the background colour to a darker shade of grey.

You can add new applets by right-clicking on a blank area in the panel and choosing 'Add Applet to Panel', but you should install any applets you can find from your distribution's package manager first. Ones to look out for include:

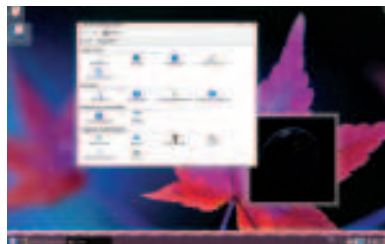
- › **KNewsTicker** An RSS reader that scrolls headlines across the bottom of the screen; click on one to open the originating page. It's amazing how much you can read while doing other things.
- › **System Monitor** Three tiny vertical or horizontal bars that represent CPU usage, free memory and swap file usage. Essential for finding wayward processes and crashed versions of *Firefox*.
- › **KWireless Monitor** Includes signal strength and a list of local access points for your wireless internet connection. Select one to join the network.
- › **KNetload** Draws a histogram that illustrates the amount of data

KDE 4

Unless you're willing to get your hands dirty, there's not all that much you can do to KDE 4 to alter its appearance. But if you're happy to edit configuration files, then you can change the default images used by the panel.

KDE 4 already has some great options for adding your own feel and functionality to the desktop. Plasma widgets are going to be the first port of call, as the interface for adding them is integrated into the desktop. But there are very few to choose between, and until KDE 4 increases in popularity, this is unlikely to change. There's still a plan to build Dashboard compatibility into Plasma widgets, which should add a vast amount of potential to the KDE 4 desktop, but until it works, you're left with the rather prosaic collection that comes with a default

installation. There are also fewer 'Look and Feel' options in KDE 4's configuration windows than the copious number found in KDE 3, and the desktop panel is no longer as flexible as the multiple options provided by KDE 3. On the positive side, *Konqueror* is still there, and still the most flexible and customisable file manager available, and the default Oxygen icon set takes a lot of beating.





› KDE's menu can quickly become a mess. We recommend replacing the default with Tasty Menu, which is much easier on the eye and features its own application search.

coming into and going out of your network connection. Useful if you pay for bandwidth.

› **KSim** Many system monitors rolled into a single application. Takes up a bit of room on the screen, but from the panel you can view process management, hardware temperature and many other stats.

Panel division

Panels can be placed anywhere on the screen, and you can have as many as you like. Right-click on an empty section, choose 'Add New Panel' and you'll see a list of six panel types. The Dock Application Bar is purely for *WindowMaker* applications (a rival window manager). External Taskbar opens a new tasks selection panel, from which you can see all running applications and switch between them. This is useful if you've got a second screen, as you can let this panel occupy the entire border of your second display. The option listed after the External Taskbar is the Kasbar. This was originally designed as a taskbar replacement, but it's now a slightly prettier panel that sits on the right-hand border of your display. The best thing about the Kasbar is that it's better suited to sitting

“The KDE app that gets closest to the Mac OS X Dock is called KoolDock.”

vertically on your screen. Applications and icons in the traditional panel view have a hard time adjusting to a vertical aspect (even though you can drag the panel to any screen edge), and Kasbar creates more appropriate icons and menus. But nothing beats the vanilla panel. You can add as many as you like, either free-floating or connected to the edge of your display, and each new one is just as capable as the default option. This means you can add applets, add the taskbar, and treat any new panels like an extension to the original. We'd recommend changing the size of the panel, to either small or tiny, and even altering the length of a panel so that it doesn't stretch across the entire edge of the screen.

The KDE application that gets closest to the Mac OS X Dock is called 'KoolDock'. This needs to be installed through your distribution's package manager, and when you run it for the first

update), right-click on the applet and you will see the menu. You can start and stop *SuperKaramba*, as well as any installed applets, from the icon that appears in the lower toolbar on your desktop.

SuperKaramba

The king of desktop applets is undoubtedly *SuperKaramba*. It has spawned a generation of copies, and is the primary inspiration behind KDE 4's Plasma. Nothing can touch its flexibility on the KDE 3.5-era desktop, and it's still a force to be reckoned with. *SuperKaramba* should be installed by default, and when you first launch it, you won't find any applets installed by default. To get some, click on the 'Get New Stuff' option at the top of the applet list. This will download a list of applets from the *SuperKaramba* site, from which you can choose which you need and install with a simple double-click. The applet will then appear on your desktop, from where you can drag it around and lock it into position. If there's a configuration panel for the applet (such as setting your location for a weather



› *SuperKaramba's* applets include the usual array of system monitors and weather applets, as well as some decent recreations of Apple's Dock.

time you will need to enter a few config options. It runs on the lower edge of the display, and by default will only feature six icons. These will scale up in size as you roll over the dock, which will itself hide beyond the lower edge of the screen after five seconds. It can be brought back to life by moving the mouse over the same edge. You can enable a task manager from the KoolDock preferences, as well as the KDE applications menu. As an alternative, we'd recommend accessing the Application menu from a right-mouse button click on the desktop instead, and this can be accomplished from the Desktop > Behaviour > General page of the KDE Control Centre.



› Oxygen icons may be one of the best aspects of the KDE 4 desktop, but there are packages available for both Gnome and KDE 3.5 that bring the same look to your favourite environment.

Get the perfect desktop



Compiz-Fusion

Real eye candy that's compatible with any desktop environment – as long as you've got the graphics hardware.

Compiz is one of those Linux technologies that has caught the collective imagination. It may be frowned upon by some as being a waste of resources and nothing but eye candy, but *Compiz* has done a great deal of good for the Linux desktop. It exceeds similar technologies in Apple's OS X and Microsoft's Vista, and gives non-Linux users a great deal to talk about. Can there be anyone who hasn't seen the 3D desktop cube, or read a description of the wobbly windows in the general computer press?

But the bottom line is that *Compiz* is a good thing, and it's finally mature enough to use in a production environment. The latest releases of both Mandriva and Ubuntu include *Compiz* support by default. This means that you should be able to install *Compiz* on your favourite distribution just as you would any other application. It's no longer a tricky process. Just search for 'compiz' in the package manager, and install this along with any associated packages. You'll usually find a plugins package that includes a pile of extra effects, for instance. *Compiz* works by replacing your desktop's window decorator with one of its own. The window decorator is the process responsible for rendering windows and window borders. Gnome's is called *Metacity*, while KDE's is called *KWin*. The *Compiz* window decorator is also called *Compiz*, and replaces the window rendering functions of the original window decorator with its own 3D enabled, eye-candy compositing version.

› *Compiz* is now officially part of popular desktops like Mandriva Spring 2008 and the latest Ubuntu release, making it easy to install.

Installation

Other than *Compiz* packages, the only absolute requirement is hardware graphics acceleration. *Compiz* places many demands on your graphics hardware, and older 2D accelerated cards can't cope. By modern games standards, graphics hardware

“Compiz will be the envy of your alternative operating system friends.”



› Not all *Compiz* effects are useful. Motion Blur, for example, can make your desktop harder to use than when it's disabled.

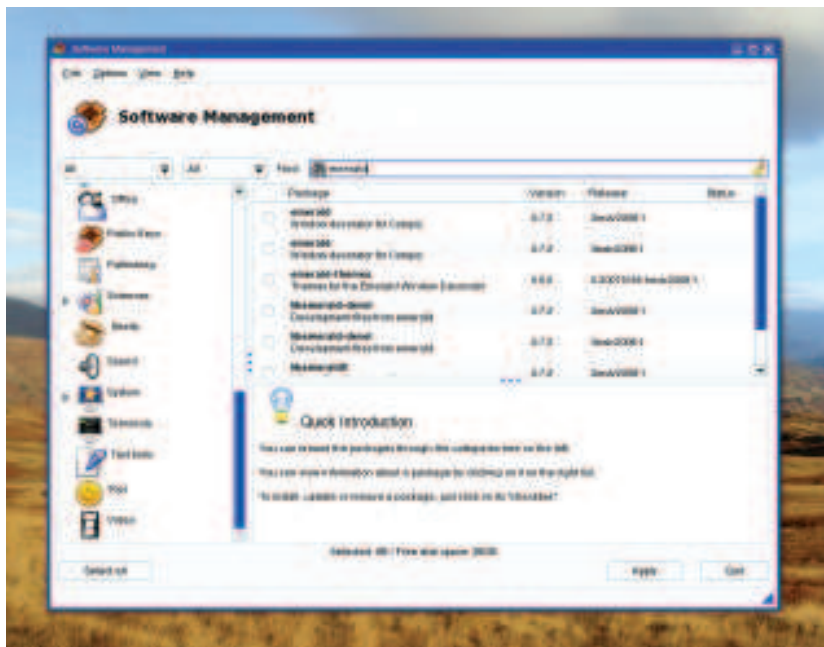
requirements are very modest, but 3D acceleration is essential. For ATI and Nvidia users, this means proprietary drivers. Mandriva One and Ubuntu include the option to install proprietary drivers from within the distribution. Third-party packages are available for Fedora, Debian, OpenSUSE and Gentoo users. In the case of Nvidia, it's not that difficult to install the Linux drivers available from the www.nvidia.com website, as long as you've got the kernel source code installed

(or a slightly older distribution). ATI drivers can be a little tricky. But it's worth the effort. After you've installed the *Compiz* packages, there are normally several ways of starting the effects. From Ubuntu, enable 'Extra' in the Visual Effects panel of the Appearance preferences Window. From Mandriva, find your way to the 'Configure 3D Desktop Effects' page in the Mandriva Control Centre and enable 'Compiz Fusion'. If you have the option, use the native compositing support rather than *Xgl*, as this is more efficient and requires less tweaking.

Most default *Compiz* installations are modest when enabled. You typically find a subtle drop-shadow effects and a new task switching tool. These are the effects least likely to offend. But there's a great deal more to experience if you're prepared to get your hands dirty, and the tool for doing that is called *CCSM*.

Pretty is a feature

If *ccsm* isn't installed, either search for it by name or try looking for 'Compiz Config' in your distro's package manager. The letters *CCSM* represent the Compiz Config Settings Manager, and it's from this burgeoning behemoth of configuration options that you can carve out your own unique take on *Compiz*. When you first launch the application, you'll see what we mean. Depending on the number of plugins installed, you'll typically see dozens of separate icons, each of which hides several complex and poorly documented pages of settings. The best way to find out what something does is to enable it. But even then, things aren't





› Other *Compiz* plugins, such as **Resize Window**, can help to make your desktop experience a little more smooth.

straightforward. If you want the desktop cube, for example, you need to enable the Desktop Cube effect as well as the Rotate Cube effect, or you'll never be able to see it. Similarly, you may think that enabling Snapping Windows is a good idea if you want to get windows to snap the borders of the desktop or other windows. Except that when you try to enable Snapping Windows, *Compiz* informs you that Wobbly Windows needs to be disabled first. This isn't much good for those of us who like our windows wobbly, until you realise you can have both. Snapping Windows can be enabled from within the Wobbly Windows configuration page, and it's normally enabled by default, only it's only activated when you hold down the hift key while dragging windows. The 'Snap inverted' option reverses this, enabling Snap windows whenever you drag a

window. There are many similar options and problems within *Compiz*, but regardless of these issues, *Compiz* will still be the envy of your alternative OS friends. Here are a few of the plugins that make it worth all the effort:

› **Desktop Cube** Synonymous with *Compiz* since the earliest days, the desktop cube pastes a different virtual desktop on to each side of the cube. It doesn't even need to be cuboid. Increase the desktop size in the General options page of *CCSM*, and the 'cube' will adapt accordingly. You may also need to replace your desktop pager applet with a *Compiz* compatible one, as the older variety don't understand the new layout.

› **Resize Window** This simple effect replaces the window resize function of the window manager with something a little more glossy. By default, that means a constant screen update of the window's contents, but we find this effect too taxing on the CPU. We find the 'Rectangle' resize mode much more practice, as it replaces the window with a transparent colour. It still looks good, and uses fewer system resources.

› **Window Previews** When you minimise a window to the task bar, this plugin will enable you to see the contents of the window by holding the mouse over the minimised icon. It will also show a preview of windows on different desktops, which makes it ideal if your desktop happens to look like an application menagerie.

› **Enhanced Zoom Desktop** This falls under the Accessibility category in *CCSM*, but it's one of the most useful plugins of the entire installation. It allows you to zoom into the area directly under the mouse cursor by holding down a special key (normally the 'Windows' key) and scrolling the mouse wheel. It's great for enlarging small sections of the screen, and is particularly well suited to small video windows. **LXF**

Over to you

We'd love to see the results of your desktop tinkering. If you come up with anything half decent, why not take a screenshot and drop us a line at lxletters@futurenet.co.uk or post your efforts to the LXF Forums. If we like what we see, we may even put a collection of the best on the **LXFDVD**.



Three top tips: Emerald Theme Manager

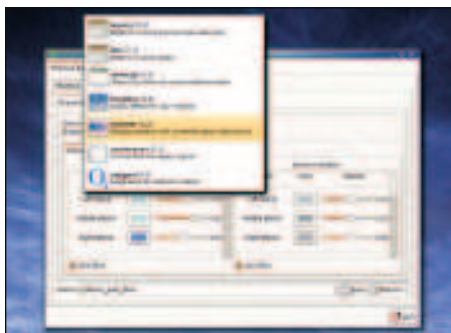
Most Linux desktops, including Gnome and KDE, feature their own window themes, but these are lost when you switch to the *Compiz* window manager. Fortunately we have the *Emerald Theme Manager*, the *Compiz* equivalent to the Gnome and KDE ones that's more flexible and better looking. *Emerald* is seldom installed by default, but you should find it in your distribution's package manager without difficulty. The best way to run *Emerald* is from something called the *Fusion-Icon* applet. This is a small tool that lets you switch between window managers and launch the

Emerald Theme Manager and *Compiz* from a single icon. From *Fusion-Icon*, you also need to enable the *Emerald Window Decorator* before launching the theme manager.

When first installed, *Emerald* doesn't include any actual themes. These can be downloaded from <http://themes.beryl-project.org>. Click on the Import button in the theme manager to load the theme, and your desktop window decorations will change. But for real fun, you'll want to make your own modifications to your favourite theme. The *Emerald Theme Manager* makes this easy: just

switch to the Edit Theme page and make the changes you need.

The biggest differences are brought about by changing the rendering engine. This is responsible for the glass-like effects many of the themes use in the window titlebar. Oxygen, for example, is similar to the Aero look used by Microsoft's Vista, and 'Trueglass' is quite Apple-like. The other options you have for colouring the window frame are entirely dependent on the rendering engine you choose, and any updates you make will be reflected in the window decoration in real time.



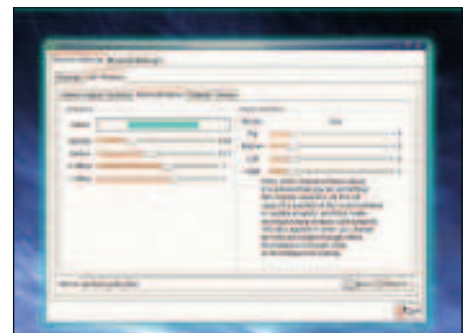
1 Rendering engine

Our favourite rendering engine is called *Vrunner*. It looks good and it doesn't overwhelm you with too many options.



2 Title-bar colour

We opted for a green shade on one side and a deeper blue on the other. *Emerald* blends these to look something like a natural reflection.



3 Drop shadows

You can make shadows any colour you like, with brighter tones creating a bloom effect around the windows.