



The best new open source software on the planet

LXF HotPicks



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When he's not pretending to fix large email networks, Andy dives off coral reefs, checking oyster shells for HotPicks pearls.

Atomic Tanks » Buddi » Data Crow » GogglesMM » KRecipes » ImageKonverter » Worm Blast » Xfburn » XML Copy Editor

File manager

4Pane



Version 0.6.0 Web www.4pane.co.uk

We've covered a fair few file managers in these pages before, so it was quite a surprise that we hadn't come across the excellent *4Pane* already.

Built using *GTK* libraries, it's relatively painless to install thanks to the many different packages available, and if you're running *Gnome* then you

to the System Tools menu under Applications, so it's not long before you're ready to dive in.

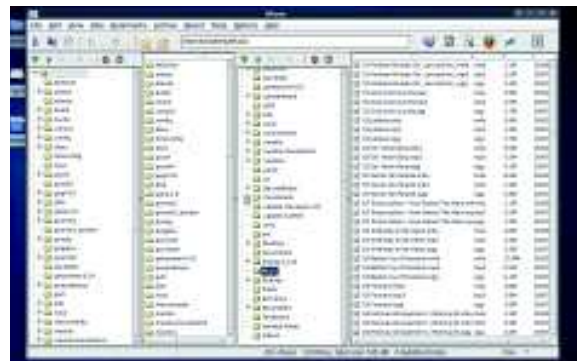
The first thing that strikes you is the sheer number of panes, and this is because *4Pane* gives you two pairs of file trees to work with. As you'd hope, navigating through the filesystem hierarchy is lightning quick – the left-hand pane of each

pair enables you to move through the directories while the right-hand pane displays their contents. All fairly

“The first thing that strikes you is the sheer number of panes.”

shouldn't need to install any additional dependencies either. Once you're done, you'll find an icon conveniently added

standard so far, but much more is possible. You see, you're not stuck with just two pairs of panes – *4Pane* takes a



» Offering more than just a simple file navigation tool, *4Pane* might just become your file manager of choice.

tabbed approach to file browsing, so you can open up loads of different tabs, each with its own pair of panes showing the filesystem. It's up to you as to how many you use, and it's easy to flick between them. What's more, you're able to name each tab to fit in with your workflow and create template views that you can use again. Also, a handful of icons in the toolbar enable you to drag and drop files to open them with the icon's related application, for example *Gedit* or *Kate*.

Plenty of depth

Other navigation options include the ability to create bookmarks within the filesystem for quick flicking to oft-used locations, and there are also shortcuts to some of the more frequently used command line tools, all of which feature a helpful command builder that takes you step by step through building the command. As a bonus you get to see the full command before it's executed, giving you the opportunity to brush up on your knowledge. It's pleasingly in-depth, which also characterises the appeal of this file manager.

Exploring the 4Pane interface

Directory tree

Click the tree icon to toggle between the full directory tree and your home folder.

Tabs

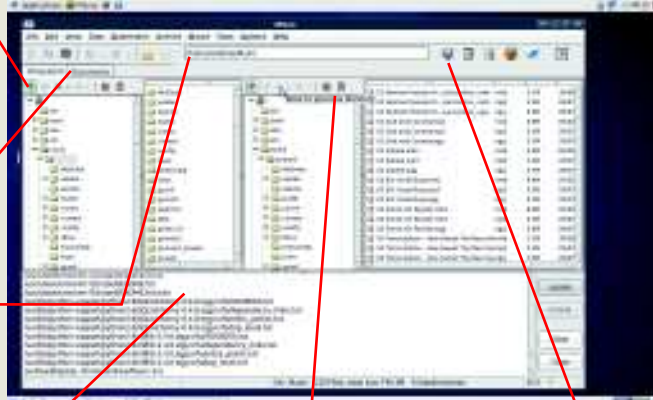
Want to sort through lots of files? These will make your life easier.

Absolute path

The path to the directory you're currently working on is displayed here.

Outputs

You can access the terminal directly and output is shown here.



Shortcuts

These icons will take you to your home directory or documents.

Application launchers

Drag and drop a file on to one of these icons to open it in that app.

Personal finance manager

Buddi

Version 3.2.2.7 Web <http://buddi.thecave.homeunix.org>

The news might have you believe that the world is ending, and it's true that swine flu and the recession make it easier to feel disconsolate about current affairs. Fortunately, we can help you with at least one thing here at LXF, and that's making your money go further.

Buddi is a Java-based application that aims to make doing your finances as simple as possible. It's based on the double-entry bookkeeping system, which helps you to reduce errors, and provides a minimalist interface to keep you focused on tracking your money. Unfortunately, the Java base makes the interface feel dated, but you should put that aside, because once you get into it, *Buddi* is a great, straightforward app.

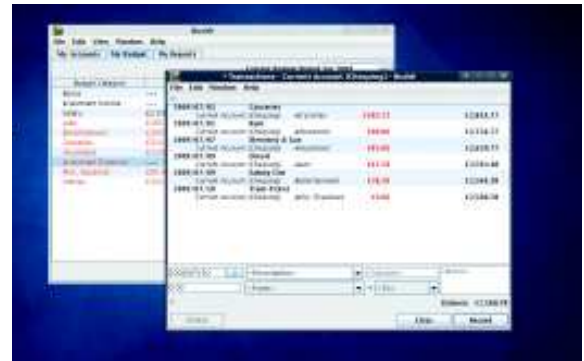
The action takes place over three tabs, the first of which enables you to see all your active accounts at a glance. *Buddi* will cope with the majority of mainstream accounts and transactions,

including scheduled transactions such as rent, as well as credit cards and loans. Simply enter each transaction within the register for the account and *Buddi* will automatically deduct funds from or add them to accounts that are involved in the transaction.

On a budget?

The second tab enables you to quickly create a budget for each month and has the ability to carry forward figures into following months too. You're provided with a handful of budget categories, but can add as many more as you need; just remember that you're going to have to maintain them all. Keeping things manageable is the key,

“Buddi is based on the double-entry bookkeeping system.”



› In these dark days, *Buddi* will be the friend who helps you save, rather than spend, your money.

which is why *Buddi* also enables you to nest categories under catch-all headers.

The final tab enables you to create a number of different reports. These are rendered into a webpage, which holds both summary information for an overview and more detailed lines should you want to get to the bottom of where all your cash has gone.

Sadly, there's no way to import existing information in the form of CSV files or spreadsheets, so *Buddi* will require a fresh start. However, if the complexity of *GnuCash* puts you off then we'd suggest you take a look at *Buddi*; it might be the first step to getting to grips with your finances.

Music manager

GogglesMM

Version 0.10.5 Web <http://tinyurl.com/4xwwkw>

That company in Cupertino – you know the one we mean – has a lot to answer for. Although it didn't invent the idea of portable digital music players, it was instrumental in making the concept of digital music as pervasive as it is today.

Many contenders to the throne have sprung up over the last few years. Some have taken the route of aping the giant's software, others have tried to be different by adding a range of largely ignored extra functionality. *Goggles Music Manager* (*GogglesMM* or *GMM* for short) is a different beast. It focuses on performing the necessary tasks well, enabling you to easily play and manage your digital music collection. It's compatible with MP3, MP4 and OGG files to name but a few, and it doesn't overwhelm you with too many options or buttons to click on. Instead it simply enables you to select your music, either

by track, artist or album, and play it. It's as simple as that.

The controls are located across the top of the application and lie alongside the usual slider bar that enables you to quickly move to a specific point in a track. There's also an equaliser that will help you choose audio settings to match your choice of music, and *GMM* provides a number of these to get you started. If you find that you need to tweak one of the settings, you can also save your new equaliser preference for future use.

It's not totally without interesting features, though, and indeed *GMM* has the ability to edit the majority of tags

“It doesn't overwhelm you with too many options or buttons.”



› Keeping it simple is probably *GMM's* biggest selling point.

associated with your music files. You can also scrobble recently played tracks to your LastFM account, show cover art and set which audio driver you want to use. If you're on a relatively recent distro, *PulseAudio* will be the default, but you can choose either *ALSA* or *Oss* should you feel the need to change.

In addition to listening to local files, you are also able to tune into internet radio stations with the requisite URL. Getting *GMM* working requires you to install *Xine*, *Fox* and *SQLite 3*, plus a few audio codecs. Performance-wise, *GMM* is nimble thanks to its *SQLite 3* back-end, and if you just want to listen to your music we recommend this.

Recipe manager

KRecipes



Version 2.0 alpha Web <http://krecipes.sourceforge.net>

We took a look at *BrewTarget* last issue, so it's only fair that this issue we took a look at a food-based application. No, it's not a client for ordering from your local takeaway or pizzeria, but a rather thorough cookbook-style application called *KRecipes*. Now we looked at it way back in **LXF77**, but with its move to version 2, a fair amount has changed. Before you start though, you'll need to install a few dependencies, including *libmysqlclient* and *libqca* as well as *CMake* in order to successfully compile the source code.

Once compilation is complete, you'll find *KRecipes* in your K menu, complete with a handful of pre-defined meals to start you on the path to culinary success. The main window takes you straight into the Recipe section of the program, enabling you to quickly find recipes that match your search terms. If your collection of recipes balloons into a library, you'll be pleased to know that *KRecipes* will also support a dedicated MySQL or PostgreSQL database in place of SQLite.

Visually, this version is more polished than ever – the move to KDE 4 is now complete, improving the look of the already high-class interface. However, the meat of the application lies in the ability to store recipes for various dishes, and KDE fans will rejoice at the detail you can go into here. You'll

need to spend some time setting up additional ingredients to suit British measurements and terminology, though – Zucchini just doesn't do it for us we're afraid!

Remember the milk

Once you've created records for the ingredients, you can start to piece together your very own gastronomic marvels using the Add Recipe window. That's not *KRecipes*' only trick, though, because you can also use it to generate your shopping list – never again will you ever forget to pick up extra salt or margarine. All you have to do is add the recipes that you intend to cook, and the software will automatically include the ingredients and amounts that are required to your list. You're able to increase or decrease these suggested amounts as required, so you won't end up with a mountain of sugar or a lake of olive oil to buy. Annoyingly, however, *KRecipes* doesn't automatically agglomerate similar entries into one, so if four recipes each need 100g of sugar, four lots of 100g will appear on your shopping list. It's a minor gripe, but one that might niggle after a while.



» **The shopping list generator is a neat idea if you often forget a few ingredients.**

Put that aside, though, because there's far more to praise than admonish here, such as *KRecipes*' brilliant ability to create a diet plan by generating meals based on your requirements. Simply tell the program how many days you want the diet to last for and how many meals a day you require to have it rustle up a varied selection of meals from the database. You can further customise this by specifying conditions, such as whether your dishes should contain meat or fish.

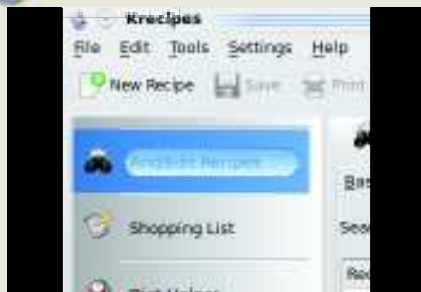
Using food up

Another common scenario we all face is looking in the cupboard and being lost for inspiration about what to do with the ingredients at hand. Worry not, for *KRecipes* enables you to enter what you have in the hope that it'll turn up a recipe for something more appetising than cabbage soup.

So, if you're a culinary maestro, *KRecipes* should have you salivating. Even if you aren't, it's a good utility to have on hand for answering the age-old question of what to eat tonight after your hard day's work.

“The move to KDE 4 is complete, improving the look of the interface.”

Step by step: Creating a recipe



» **Add your recipe**
First things first, in the main screen of *KRecipes*, click the Add Recipe button to begin a new creation.



» **Christen it**
Here you can set some information about your recipe, such as how many portions it will make and expected preparation time.



» **Half a cup**
Now enter your ingredients and measures. Other tabs enable you to enter written instructions for you to follow too.

HotGames Entertainment apps

LINUX
 FORMAT
HotPicks
Revisited

Annihilation game

Atomic Tanks

Version 3.7 Web <http://atanks.sourceforge.net>

Ah, the Commodore Amiga, how we miss thee. After all, it was the Amiga 500 that introduced us to the immortal *Worms* – an all-out battle between teams of invertebrates armed with a host of bonkers weaponry. The formula has been enduringly popular, so it's no surprise there are a number of clones out there.

Atomic Tanks is one such clone – albeit one in a more grown-up vein – where the team of worms is exchanged for a tank that you use to outgun your opponents. We last looked at the game way back in **LXF89**, where we enjoyed its light-hearted take on bombardment and destruction. Three years have passed since then, so we felt it was high time we stepped back into our gunner's seat for a rematch.

Aside from your metal avatar, the twist in the *Atomic Tanks* formula is that you can purchase new armaments at the beginning of each round with increasingly destructive capabilities. As you'd expect, each type of weapon has different characteristics, ranging from small missiles with a limited fallout range to the inspired Armageddon. With all this offensive weaponry around, it's somewhat of a relief that you have a wide range of defensive options too, including several levels of armour and shielding to keep you alive.

Once the fighting begins, you select your weapon of choice, the angle to



› **Obliterate your opposition with a huge array of devastatingly cool weaponry.**

launch it from and the velocity, then let all hell loose. The computer controlled tanks can sometimes be a little too smart, killing you before you can defend against them, but we only came across this a couple of times. What's funnier is the odd occasion that one of your enemies blows themselves to smithereens. Still, it's a good way to spend half an hour, if only for the stress relief of smashing up tanks in an apocalyptic fashion.

“You can purchase new destructive armaments at the start of a round.”

Top-down shooter game

Wormblast

Version 1.0.5 Web <http://wormblast.sourceforge.net>

We recently covered a homage to the classic *Snake* in HotPicks, and made no secret of the fact that we were wide-eyed fans of the original. Thank God there are a hundred and one different ways of interpreting the game then, because here we have another: *WormBlast*.

From a top-down viewpoint, you – along with a slew of other wriggly contestants – are unleashed upon a large open area to inflict as much destruction on each other as possible. The objective is to be the last worm alive. You can increase the size of your tail by collecting the many powerups that are distributed around the playing area, as well as arming yourself with an array of weaponry ranging from shotguns to rifles, chainguns and rocket launchers. As you're shot, you lose

health and the size of your tail starts to decrease. If you're not careful, you'll end up resembling a prime worm steak. However, the game helpfully provides a small radar screen so you can keep track of your opponents and you can easily identify the current leader and loser using the helpful tags that hover over the offending worms.

It's a blast

As you make your way around unleashing carnage upon your fellow earth eaters, you'll get the chance to pick up ammunition for your weapon too. Now it's not immediately obvious, but the ammo packs only provide extra



› **Chaingun your opponents then slither away quickly before they retaliate.**

ammunition to your currently equipped tool o'doom. It pays to remember this when you really want rockets while you're mounting a rearguard action with your rifle. It's not a particularly deep experience, but it is good fun, especially when you add in a second human player.

The game itself requires *SDL* and *PyQT4* libraries in order to run, but packages are provided for Ubuntu.

“If you're not careful, you'll end up as a prime worm steak.”

CD/DVD burner

Xfburn

Version 0.4.1 Web www.xfce.org/projects/xfburn

K3b has occupied a place at the pinnacle of Linux-based CD and DVD writing for an age. *Brasero* has gone some way to matching it on the Gnome front, but it's still not managed to attain the level of quality *K3b* has enjoyed for some time.

Xfburn, on the other hand, looks like it might just sneak into the limelight while *Brasero* isn't looking. Designed for the *Xfce* desktop environment, *Xfburn* is an application that enables you to create audio and data discs, as well as burning pre-existing disc images. The various types of disc are called compositions rather than projects, which seems a little odd to begin with, but it makes sense after a while. As you create a composition, you're given a large area at the bottom of the screen to start loading your files or tracks onto (for data and audio compositions).

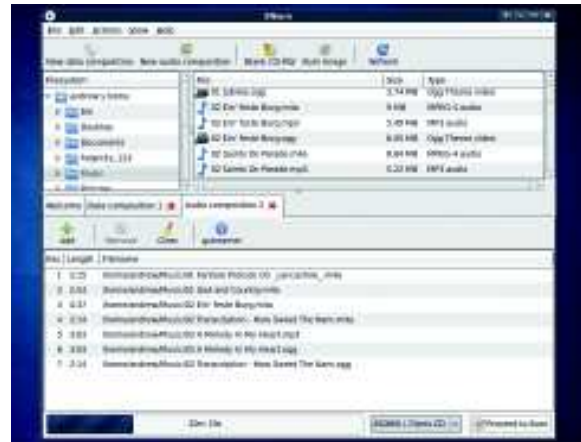
Spend a little time with the interface and you'll discover all the usual

suspects are here – there's a bar showing you how much space or time your files are taking up, along with the option to choose a different type of disc ranging from the credit card sized 200MB CD right up to the dual-layer 7.9GB DVD. *Xfburn* will only let you burn to discs that are compatible with the compositions that you're creating, though, so you can't create a 4.7GB audio disc, for example.

Feel the burn

All this takes place in an uncluttered interface, as you would hope from an *Xfce* application, and there are useful tooltips on hand where necessary. We particularly liked the *GStreamer* notice

“Xfburn looks like it might just sneak in while Brasero isn't looking.”



› Something of a jack of all trades, *Xfburn* offers lightweight CD and DVD mastering.

when creating our audio discs, although we did feel a little dirty when it started suggesting we install additional codecs if our music files weren't recognised. If you're in any doubt about the functionality of your optical drive, you can get a rundown of what it can cope with in *Xfburn's* Preferences, along with information about the device it's mounted on.

Overall, *Xfburn* is well worth a look – it'll take care of most tasks associated with burning discs, and do it with style.

Collection manager

Data Crow

Version 3.4.8 Web www.datacrow.net

If there's one thing we've learned, it's that we're hoarders. Whether it's books, CDs or DVDs, we've got years of accumulated stuff clogging up our houses. However, keeping track of it all is tricky, so we were glad to find out about *Data Crow* – a Java application that promises to be the ultimate collection manager. The best thing about it is that it has links into Amazon and IMDB, which enables you to retrieve metadata for your collection, rather than have you manually type the information yourself.

We've mentioned how dated some Java applications can look, but this isn't the case with *Data Crow* – the interface looks almost native. The overall look and feel is polished and the developer has clearly taken pains to maintain a high level of quality throughout.

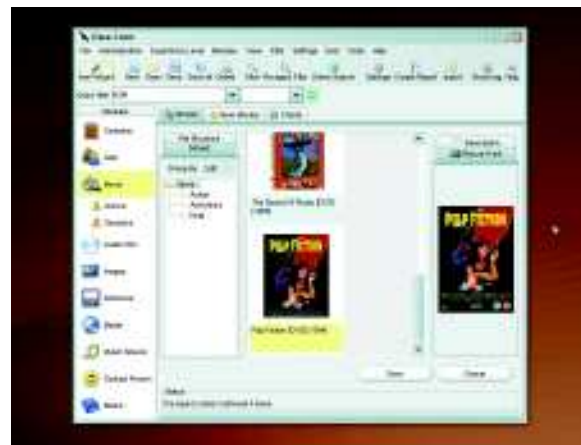
Warning you from the off that it might become a little complicated, *Data*

Crow strongly recommends that you use the Beginner view to get yourself going. We'd suggest that you follow that advice, since you still retain the ability to record a lot of information but avoid overwhelming yourself.

Caw blimey

There's loads of categories to store data in within the app, but let's look at adding a DVD to your collection as an example. Clicking the Movies button in the left-hand pane takes you into the Movies and DVDs area. From here you can click the Item Wizard button in the toolbar and enter the name of the DVD. The Find button instructs *Data Crow* to go

“It has links to Amazon and IMDB, which saves you entering data.”



› You can keep track of nearly any collection, regardless of what it contains, with the versatile *Data Crow*.

online and search for matches, which are then returned in a list. Select an option and click Open to retrieve data for you to investigate further. If you're happy with the match, add the film to your library and start your next search.

It's worth knowing the process can take a little while – sometimes up to 20 seconds to retrieve data – but we're sure you'll find the time well spent. In short, this is an eminently customisable app that deserves a home on any distro.

XML editor

XML Copy Editor

Version 1.2.0.4 Web <http://xml-copy-editor.sourceforge.net>

XML seems to have conquered just about every area of interconnectivity between disparate systems. As a way of transforming information from one format to another, it's become synonymous with web services and interoperability. Now Linux is well blessed with a wide variety of code editors, but some of these favour XML above all others. *XML Copy Editor* is one of those specialist pieces of software designed to help you code XML and nothing but XML.

There's none of the cruft associated with other IDEs on display here; *XML Copy Editor* is lean and focused to the point where it almost seems minimalist. It can handle pretty much any XML standards-based document, including both DocBook and *Moodle* formats, and provides code highlighting too. Line numbering is also enabled out of the box, along with the requisite Expand

and Collapse tools to help you make sense of your code. On the right-hand side you'll find a couple of navigation aids, which enable you to keep track of exactly where your cursor is at any time. You also have access to tools to ensure you're on the right path by validating your XML against included schema.

On top of that, *XML Copy Editor* will format your XML for you, in an attempt to make it more readable. We found it to be a competent if basic editor, offering all we needed to craft new code.



› *XML Copy Editor* can handle pretty much any XML standards-based document, including both DocBook and Moodle formats.

Image conversion tool

ImageKonverter

Version 0.3.2 Web <http://imagekonverter.sourceforge.net>

The explosion in the popularity of digital photography has led to thousands of photos littering hard drives all over the world. Add to that the ever-increasing complexity of programs designed to help you work with your images and it's not long before you'll start to struggle.

ImageKonverter is the antithesis of these efforts, offering a simple way to handle batch conversion of many photos from one format to another. It can also handle renaming and, in some cases, resizing jobs too. It takes a range of input formats, although notably RAW files aren't accommodated here, and it outputs to popular formats including TIFF and JPEG.

The interface itself is a simplistic affair, but that matches well with the program's *raison d'être*. What's important is that it's easy to change the file format and add a custom suffix to

the name of each file. In addition, you can choose to either resize the pictures to a set resolution, or you can shrink them based on percentages. In practice, it's pretty swift, although you should be prepared for it to take its toll on your processor if you're handling lots of files, or large files. As it chomps through the work, you'll see the progress bar advance, so you can keep track of how it's progressing. In short, it's a simple tool that performs a need well. **LXF**



› *ImageKonverter* is nippy, efficient and meets one need well – what more could you ask for?

Also released

New and updated software that also deserves a look...

› **Guayadeque Music Player 0.11**

This provides more than just music playback by including LastFM support and links to online services. <https://sourceforge.net/projects/guayadeque>



› Links to online services help you get more from your tunes.

› **G Scribble 0.0.1**

The first release of this blogging client. Initially, it will only support WordPress blogs. <https://sourceforge.net/projects/gscribble>



› G Scribble is a new WordPress-centric blogging client.

› **Yarbu 1.4.3**

Another GUI tool to help you get to grips with *rsync*. <http://yarbu.sourceforge.net>

› **Vinace revision 24**

Ever wanted to emulate an old Apple II? Well, now's your chance. <https://sourceforge.net/projects/vinace>

› **Minidlna 1.0.15**

A small DNLA-compliant media server, enabling you to stream audio and video around your house. <https://sourceforge.net/projects/minidlna>

› **KChildlock 0.66.3**

Keep your kids from overusing your computer with this handy utility that blocks access at defined times. <https://sourceforge.net/projects/kchildlock>