

# Distrowatch

» This month's roundup of news from the vaults of Linux distro development.



**SUSAN LINTON**  
is owner/  
operator of  
[tuxmachines.org](http://tuxmachines.org).

## MS money

Last month, I had a little fun at the expense of some Ubuntu users who got upset when they weren't consulted before Canonical signed the search deal with Yahoo. Sorry if I offended anyone, but I just couldn't resist. Why is it surprising that distributions don't ask for user input on monetary decisions?

A legitimate concern was that Yahoo and Microsoft had been waiting for approval of their search and advertising partnership, and once granted, Microsoft would in essence be funding Ubuntu and providing searches. But if searches end up being Microsoft-slanted, a user need only switch to another search engine.

## Confused

More fundamentally, people were upset that Ubuntu would receive support from Microsoft. This reminds me of people who boycott some Linux sites that show Microsoft ads. I don't understand why it's acceptable to take money from Google or 3CX Phone System for Windows but not Microsoft. I recall some of Microsoft's methods in its effort to squash Linux and open source – but that's all the more reason to take its money.

Well done to Ubuntu for getting revenue to fund development where it can. I wish all distros could. The best revenge against Microsoft is to succeed on its dime.

[lxf.distrowatch@futurenet.com](mailto:lxf.distrowatch@futurenet.com)

# Elive Topaz 2.0

**Enlightenment** Debian-based distro breathes new life into older hardware, but it doesn't come for free.

Elive developers released one of their rare stable versions recently. Elive 2.0 is designed to run well on aging systems, while still providing some nice but basic desktop effects.

The outward appearance hasn't changed much in the five years it's been in development, but it's still a unique approach, even if it's beginning to look dated. Beyond that, Elive offers a fairly modern foundation with plenty of useful applications.

It's based on the stable Debian distribution and inherits its *APT* package management. A surprisingly fast-performing *Synaptic Package Management* is included for a graphical interface to *APT* and is set up to use Elive's ample repositories. Elive ships with Linux kernel 2.6.30.9, *X.org X Server 1.4.2*, and *GCC 4.1.2* is installable. The live CD also includes *Iceweasel 3.0.6*, *Gimp*



» Elive's desktop effects include pulsating minimised application icons, swooshing menu highlights and exploding app launchers.

normal install routine, you're told that you must make a small financial contribution, and are whisked away to Elive's website to give an email address where the

won't appreciate this much hassle. Also, many users won't want to donate to a project until they've used the distribution for a while to decide whether they're going to continue with it.

There's nothing wrong with trying to earn money for hard work, and donations for smaller projects are historically meagre, but there must be a better way to collect than this. In comments on a recent review of 2.0, potential users expressed anger at feeling tricked and wasting disks. Sadly, this is likely to be the opinion of many unsuspecting downloaders.

The install blunder is a shame, because otherwise Elive is a good distribution and could give new and exciting life to machines that can no longer run the heavier KDE and Gnome-based distros that are popular these days. Unfortunately, most will never know.

[www.elivecd.org](http://www.elivecd.org)

**“Users won't want to donate to a project until they've used the distribution.”**

2.4.7, *Audacious 1.5.1*, *MPlayer 1.0rc2*, *AbiWord 2.6.4*, multimedia codecs and browser plugins. The control centre has been replaced with individual configuration tools, the desktop has an *Itask NG* launchbar, an analogue-display clock, 12-desktop pager and animated background.

The Elive download is a live CD and can be enjoyed fully as such. However, in order to install it to your hard drive, you have to be patient. Early in what begins as a

installer module will be sent. Once you get that on to your target machine, you can restart the install process. But it's then interrupted again to take you to PayPal to make a donation to the project (minimum \$15, which is just over £10). Afterwards, the install will finally resume.

It's all very convoluted and a bit annoying. Linux users are spoiled by the amount of software that's available for free, much of which is easy to access, and therefore

# Igelle DSV 1.0

**Fresh Linux** Try an original distro with looks to match its performance.

**H**old tight, an extremely rare phenomenon has occurred – the release of an all-original Linux distribution. It's not based on Ubuntu, or even Debian – it isn't based on anything. Igelle claims to be an original work and a cursory look seems to verify this. Even the window manager appears to be its own. Not only that, it's a high-performing and attractive system.

Igelle does use familiar Linux components, such as kernel 2.6.32, *init*, *udev*, HAL, and D-BUS. *Grub*, *X.org X Server 1.7.1*, and *GCC 4.4.1* are also present. Igelle makes use of other familiar code. Parts of

the *LXDE* desktop environment are visible, such as the *LXterminal* and *LXtask*. *GVFS*, *gconfd* and the Gnome volume control applet are brought in from Gnome. Igelle uses *Cairo Compiz Manager* for some light desktop effects, with elements from *Metacity* to help make their *Esther Desktop*.

You'll find familiar lightweight apps, as well as *Gimp*, *Pidgin*, *OpenOffice.org*, *PiTiVi* video editor, the *GCompris* educational suite and *Crack Attack*.

The installer is easy to use, and takes about five minutes to complete. The Igelle website then has documentation for tasks

including software compilation and administration, as well as an active user forum. Igelle DSV 1.0 is the second release of this unique system, and versions are also available for embedded devices and mobile phones. Be sure to take this one for a test drive. [www.igelle.com](http://www.igelle.com)



The desktop has a menu to open windows for apps, file browsing and settings.

# PC-BSD 8.0

**BSD-based** New features include 3D drivers and live DVD mode.

**P**C-BSD, the Ubuntu of free BSDs, has been in development for about five years and was bought by iXsystems in 2006. Development continued and version 8.0 was recently released with some exciting updates and new features.

One of the most exciting new features is its live DVD mode. You can now test PC-BSD before giving up any hard drive space.

The installer has been rewritten, looks attractive, and offers the ability to install PC-BSD or FreeBSD. This is especially handy for those who may want a server in addition to a desktop. It's

like two systems in one download, and supports UFS, UFS-J, UFS-S and ZFS filesystems.

The software manager has been updated to enable browsing of PBIs (PC-BSD's package format) and installation from the desktop rather than having to venture on to the web. PC-BSD still supports installing any of the numerous FreeBSD packages through the console tool *pkg\_add*.

This release is based on FreeBSD 8.0 and features KDE 4.3.5 and Nvidia and AMD/ATI proprietary 3D graphics drivers. Besides the KDE application suite, it comes with other handy

software and configuration tools. *OpenOffice.org*, *Firefox* and *Gimp* are available for install along with heaps of other free software tools.

We've a full review of PC-BSD 8 on page 23, and you'll find it on the **LXF DVD** so you can install and take it for a spin yourself. [www.pcbbsd.org](http://www.pcbbsd.org)

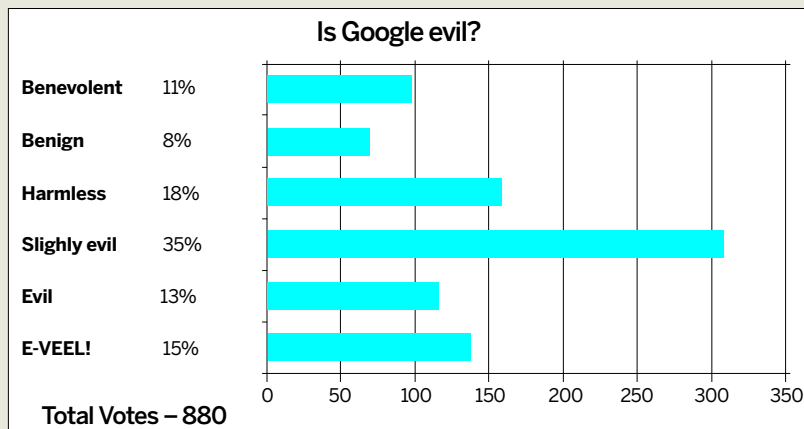


PC-BSD has an extensive user manual on its website to help with installation and use.

## Is Google evil?

Google continues its march into every aspect of human existence. It recently began testing broadband service in the US and has been granted permission to buy and sell electricity. It also has the means to monitor power usage with its online Google PowerMeter, and then rolled out its

Public Data Explorer to analyse user data more extensively. Am I just being overly paranoid, or is there something more sinister behind these moves? I polled users to see what they thought, and results suggest that I'm not the only person who's worried.



## Hit list

The 10 most visited distro pages on DistroWatch.com, 1–31 March 2010 (average hits per day)

Distro	Number of hits
1 Ubuntu	2,509
2 Fedora	1,600
3 PCLinuxOS	1,482
4 Linux Mint	1,411
5 OpenSUSE	1,308
6 Debian	1,146
7 Mandriva	1,093
8 Sabayon	1,031
9 Lubuntu	820
10 Mepis	795

» DistroWatch.com monitors the popularity of distributions based on the number of visits to each of its distro-specific pages. While these figures don't represent the actual install base, it's an indicator of which distros were hot during each specific time period. **LXF**