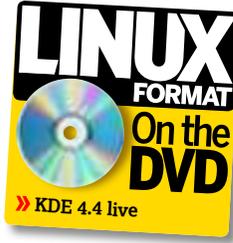# KDE 4.4

LINUX FORMAT
On the DVD
» KDE 4.4 live

KDE 4.4 has been released – has it reached the stage where it's a good choice for most users? **Neil Bothwick** leaves the terminal for a while to see.

In brief…

» Comprehensive, integrated desktop environment and software collection. See also: Gnome.

KDE recently released version 4.4 of its all-singing, all-dancing desktop environment, and it should start appearing in new distro releases soon. We gave KDE 4.3 a thorough test in **LXF124**, so we'll now bring you up to date on what's changed.

According to the KDE bug tracking system, 7,293 bugs have been fixed and 1,433 feature requests implemented. That sounds like a lot, but the figures for KDE 4.3 were noticeably higher.

The most significant change to the appearance of the standard desktop is the addition of tabbed, or grouped, windows. You may need to enable this in the Appearance section of *System Settings*, then either right-click the title bar of a window and select the group to move it to, or middle-click and drag it over the title bar of another window, and you get two windows in one. Although referred to as tabbing, there are no actual tabs, just more than one title in the window's title bar, so no

> **The new plasma-netbook interface crams plenty of material on to a small screen, while tabbed windows help you organise your workspace better.**

"The most significant change is the addition of tabbed windows."

screen space is lost, making this great for netbooks and other small-screen devices. Unfortunately, it currently only works with the Oxygen theme.

If you're using a netbook, try the new plasma-netbook interface – an icon-based launcher, with a panel for your favourite apps, where every window opens full screen. It's one of the best netbook-specific displays around.

The semantic desktop, where searching considers file contents as well as names and dates, is now considered mature and has been integrated into *Dolphin*. The default for the search gadget at the top of the *Dolphin* window now is to search the text of files, which only takes a few seconds, thanks to the *Nepomuk* database. Removable media handling has been improved slightly with the new pop-up menu on the Device Notifier widget being faster.

Most of the applications are improved versions of those from 4.3, but there are some additions like the *Bloglio* blogging client. The social desktop features introduced in KDE 4.3 have improved. The *Community* widget, as it's now called, enables you to send messages directly from the widget, while the new *Social News* widget shows live updates.

Developer features

There are also features introduced behind the scenes that make more possible for developers. These include the switch to *Qt 4.6*, the new *KAuth* secure authentication framework, central identity management for the social desktop, open collaboration features and improved integration with open and free desktop standards.

KDE 4.3 suffered from stability problems. Random crashes that caused *X* to exit were not frequent, but unpredictable and intensely annoying. We've been using KDE 4.4 since it was in beta and not had a single crash. One weird bug is that the *Krunner* dialog, the window that opens when you press Alt+F2, will occasionally freeze for several seconds. Everything else works but this won't accept any input.

Some aspects of KDE do use their fair share of resources, but the general desktop performance is good.
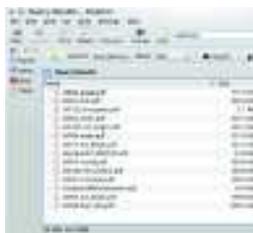
This is a strong move forward. The new features aren't outstanding, but improvements in stability and usability are a real step in the right direction. Shout it from the rooftops – KDE is finally ready for general use. **LXF**

Features at a glance

Tabbed windows
Three programs, one window. The new window tabs make organising your desktop easier and help save screen space.

Better searching
Dolphin searches now include the contents of individual files, thanks to its use of the *Nepomuk* database.

LINUX FORMAT — Verdict

KDE 4.4

Developer: KDE
Web: www.kde.org
Price: Free under GPL

Features	8/10
Performance	7/10
Ease of use	7/10
Documentation	8/10

» *KDE 4.x is finally ready for general use and is more stable than previous releases, but there's still work to do.*

Rating **8/10**