

Ubuntu 10.04



That time of year is here again: the birds are singing and Ubuntu has a new release. **Neil Bothwick** looks at Lucid Lynx to see what all the fuss is about.

In brief...

» The latest distro from Ubuntu, with a brand new look. See also: OpenSUSE, Mandriva, Fedora.

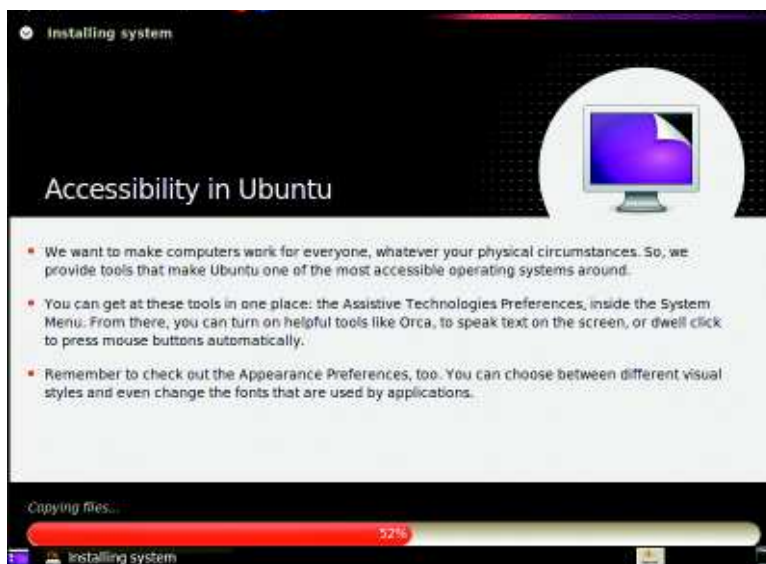
Software versions

- » Kernel 2.6.32
- » X.org 1.75
- » Gnome 2.30.0
- » OpenOffice.org 3.2.0

It's time for the twice yearly jump in internet traffic as Ubuntu releases its new version into the wild. Most of the pre-launch discussion has been about buttons and colours, so let's get that out of the way first. The various browns used for the default themes of previous releases (the Human theme), have given way to a theme called Light, the predominant colour of which can best be described as aubergine.

We never liked the browns, but that wasn't a reason to not use the distro, as it's easy to change a default theme. The same can be said of the new window button positioning: the window control buttons have moved from the right of the title bar to the left, and a good many people have switched them almost instantly to the familiar layout of old. In the interests of fairness we decided to stick with the new layout for a while, and found the change pretty easy to get used to. Speaking of themes, there are a couple of new ones included, Ambiance and Radiance, along with the old favourites. However, it seems that Ubuntu cannot leave its brown obsession behind completely: when I signed up for an Ubuntu One account, the first captcha word was "brownish".

Ubuntu installation has always been a quick and simple process, and it still



» The Ubuntu installer is as fast and easy to use as ever, even if it does take shocking liberties with your network bandwidth.

is. One nice touch is that it uses your network connection to determine your location, based on your IP address, and pick your timezone. A less friendly use of the network is to automatically download language packs towards the end of the installation. If you're on a metered or capped connection, you may not be too happy to find it downloading data without asking. There

is a skip button, but this is no use if you take the standard 'answer the questions then make a cup of tea' approach to installation. A cynic may suggest that this is a sneaky way of hiding the fact that Ubuntu can no longer fit a standard installation on a CD.

Hardware detection is as good as ever, with the added touch that Nvidia video cards now use the open source

New features at a glance

Window buttons

Buttons are now grouped at the left side of the title bar, which takes a little getting used to.

Gwibber

Gwibber shows all your social networking sources, either as a single list as here or separated.

It's purple!

The new aubergine theme makes a refreshing change from brown.

Software Centre

The *Software Centre* is the new method of software installation and package management.

Cloud storage

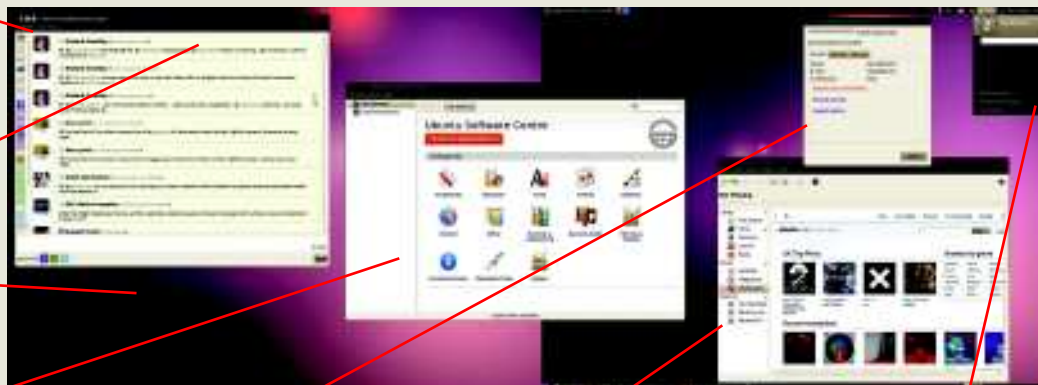
Ubuntu One synchronises your data with the cloud, and also with any other Ubuntu computers you have.

iTunes for Linux

The Ubuntu One Music store integrates with *Rhythmbox* or *Banshee* and supports downloads to multiple computers.

Me menu

The Me Menu gives access to your Ubuntu One account, social networking, instant messaging and microblogging.



Nouveau driver. This works well as long as you don't try to use 3D desktop effects. When you try to enable those, the system recognises that this driver is unsuitable and installs the Nvidia drivers, after asking. This transition is as smooth as it can be, although a reboot (or at least stopping X, unloading the Nouveau module and restarting X) is needed after switching.

The new theme is called Light, but that also applies to other aspects of 10.04. The whole distro, or at least the base install, is more lightweight. The most significant app to be dropped is *Gimp*. Most people want to be able to crop digital photos, remove red eyes and compensate for poor exposure, and *Gimp* is just too much hard work for those sort of tasks – the *F-Spot* image editor makes a lot more sense.

We live for the One...

Canonical provides services to go with Ubuntu, like Ubuntu One. At its simplest this is an online storage service, with 2GB of storage for free, or 50GB if you take out a subscription for \$10 per month. Ubuntu One is more than a DropBox clone though, as you can attach several computers to an account so that the directories you sync with the service have the same contents on all of them. Contacts and bookmarks can be kept in sync across your computers, and the list of options is likely to increase as support is added in other applications. There's also support for syncing contacts with mobile phones, but only in the paid-for service.

Ubuntu One is also linked to the Ubuntu Music Store. Any music you buy is added to your Ubuntu One space and downloaded to *Rhythmbox* the next time you sync, on as many instances of Ubuntu as you want.

The Ubuntu *Software Centre* was introduced in 9.10, and was a poor



» Ubuntu now has its own dedicated software management, although *Synaptic* is still there for now.

Focus on Kubuntu

Kubuntu has never received the same amount of love as its Gnome-based cousin, and this has never been more evident than with the 10.04 release. There seems to be zero deviation from the blues and greys of KDE's default Oxygen theme, which leaves you wondering why anyone would choose Ubuntu's derivative over any other vanilla KDE distro?

It certainly wouldn't be for stability. Within the first 30 minutes, the KDE Control Module crashed while searching for a plugin. Our screen resolution was wrong, and one of the tools listed in the launch menu to fix it doesn't work (*KRandRTray*). We received a package error trying to install the official version of *Chromium*, and every time we



attempted to resize and move the new Twitter widget and desktop folder viewer, Plasma would crash and reset its position back to the bottom-right corner. Add to this the confusion of six boot entries within two

days, and the odd aesthetic choices of blue glows around active windows and the authentication window appearing behind the main window when you enter a password, and you get a pretty poor user experience.



Paul says...

"Since installing Lucid I've had several apps crash, I've been asked questions about *Grub* when performing simple updates, and I'm shocked that it shipped with a *Grub* problem in Kubuntu. This is a big step backwards!"

alternative to *Synaptic*. In 10.04 it is much better, showing software organised by categories and a 'featured applications' section. Application descriptions include a screenshot and a link to the program's website, making it a slick package manager. *Synaptic* is still present, and has some advantages like being able to see the contents of a package (although die-hards use *dpkg* for that), but for most the *Software Centre* is the more useful option, especially as we can expect to see further developments.

All change

Lucid Lynx is a Long Term Support release, which means that this release will be supported with updates for three years – twice the period for the other releases (the server edition has support for five years). With LTS releases coming every two years, this is a good choice for those who don't want to be messing around with upgrades or reinstallations twice a year. LTS releases are usually a little more conservative in software choices, but this release is as big a jump between versions, in terms of the overall experience, as any of the non-LTS releases. If you are an LTS user and switching from the last such release, 8.04, everything will appear new or different.

While some distros and operating systems add My This and My That, Ubuntu now has the Me menu. Clicking on your username in the status bar gives a menu where you can set your IM status, access various chat and social

networking services or post to microblogging services. Every desktop and distro seems to be proclaiming improved social networking this year, and the Me menu helps with that. Once you have set up accounts in here, they also appear in *Gwibber*, although that is accessed from the Email icon on the status bar for some reason.

Ubuntu has made much of its fast boot speeds, with Lucid claimed to be faster than ever. Comparing the time from boot to login screen on identically configured virtual machines, Lucid took two thirds of the time (14 seconds compared with 21 seconds for 9.10).

LXF has often been accused of pro-Ubuntu bias, but this reviewer has never been a fan. However, Lucid Lynx has changed that. It's fast, slick and really works as an integrated whole. Nothing to do with the lack of brown... **LXF**

LINUX Verdict

Ubuntu Desktop Edition 10.04

Developer: Canonical Ltd
Web: www.ubuntu.com
Price: Free under multiple open source licences

Features	9/10
Performance	9/10
Ease of use	9/10
Documentation	8/10

» This release is a real step forward for Ubuntu, especially in the eyes of those who have not chosen it before.

Rating 9/10