

Things I like about KDE4.

Written by Sean Tilley
Thursday, 28 May 2009 00:00

There's been quite a bit of hubub about the KDE project ever since the 4.0 release last year. Critics have slammed the 4.0 series repeatedly, citing the mentality of "Well, it's not good enough to be a full release.". Between the poor publicity, the crashes in Plasma, and the still-developing early features, KDE was definitely not having a good time. Developer blogs were plastered with hateful comments, and one of my favorite devs Aaron Seigo had to temporarily shut down his blog.

However, for all the bad rap that the 4.0 series received, KDE has grown wonderfully. With the upcoming releases of KDE 4.3, Plasma has become a rock-solid desktop environment. Sites such as KDE-Look.org have dozens of Plasmoids and Plasma themes ready for desktop user consumption. Major headway is being done on theming, as new community artists continue to contribute new variations of the existing theme engines. (This user in particular is using the "Introducing KDE4" Bespin configuration theme)

With all said and done, I would like to bullet-point a few things that I really love about KDE. After tinkering around with the system and setting up a build environment (mainly for building Plasmoid binaries), I have this to say:

- Plasma gets the job done nowadays. It's not the crashy, spiteful desktop of the 4.0 days. Also, many of the themes and plasmoids that have come out are just incredible. As of writing this, I'm using the Daisy plasmoid for Window management with an Xbar on a panel up top. All with a Glassified theme. Looks spiffy!

- Cmake, the build system for KDE applications, is a fantastic piece of work. I've always had trouble with the build-essentials packages when compiling Gnome apps. I have to hand it to Gnome packaging teams, that stuff can be a real pain in the rear if you don't know the dependencies! At the very least, Cmake is great about letting me know about a missing dependency, or an error in the CMakeLists.txt, or etc. It's becoming a real joy just to find the most obscure experimental apps on KDE-Apps.org, and build them to see what they do.

- Kwin is nice and snappy. I've loved the simple effects that ship with it, but it's a real lifesaver for when something goes awry when I build experimental Plasmoids that crash Plasma. You can just flick to a running terminal. Better yet, you can just run Yakuake and make things even easier.

Things I like about KDE4.

Written by Sean Tilley
Thursday, 28 May 2009 00:00

-The KDEArtwork package gets better with every subsequent release. Oxygen becomes more and more beautiful and polished, and the user-submitted wallpapers that make it into the release package are top-notch. While I usually end up just switching to the wallpapers I've always used, the KDE wallpapers anymore look better than a lot of professional pictures done for those Other operating systems.

-The Developers are so in touch with the community. One of my favorite things is moseying over to Planet KDE and reading the latest experiments the devs are up to. There's always a fascinating screenshot or mockup to explain a concept.

-KRunner is a superb app for quickly launching anything you need to. It really reminds me of QuickSilver, which was one of my favorite OSX addons ever.

-The Folder View/Desktop view merged paradigm blows me away. I like having my Desktop function like an actual desktop, but I love using a folder view to check files in my documents. With the simplicity of dragging and dropping, Plasma has really gotten intuitive.

-Phonon's graphical configuration frontend is much more comprehensible to me than Pulse Audio Device Chooser's numerous dialogs. Out of the box, it just works with my music player, web browser, games, etc.

-As a final note, I really appreciate that the Rekonq Project has finally been officially integrated in the KDE Project. For those of you who don't know, Rekonq is built off of Trolltech's Qt Webkit example browser. It sports a clean interface, and the webkit engine is not only ridiculously fast, it renders things properly! I've always had problems with Konqueror, even with the Webkit Kpart. Hopefully, this will open up more options for KDE-compatible browsers.