

LINUX DISTRIBUTION

Ubuntu 5.10



A compiler upgrade makes this a breezier distro than Hoary. Andy Hudson finds out what else is new.

KEY STUFF

Easy-to-use Debian-based distro. Also consider Mandriva or OpenSUSE

■ **DEVELOPER**

The Ubuntu Foundation

■ **WEB** www.ubuntu.com

■ **PRICE** Free under GPL



Ubuntu is truly the enigma of the Linux world. Only released in October 2004, you might think it would need time to build its support base, yet it consistently wins awards and frequently tops the DistroWatch.com rankings. All these accolades point to one giant achievement: Mark Shuttleworth's team have taken Debian, one Linux distro that you could hardly call user-friendly, and given it a human face.

Version 5.10 (codenamed the Breezy Badger) is the latest release, and if previous versions are anything to go by it's going to be hugely popular.

The Ubuntu Foundation has worked hard on Ubuntu's installation, with the text installer now continuing to the second stage of the installation. No longer do you have to watch reams and reams of text information scrolling past at lightning pace: instead there's a friendly status bar that tells you exactly where you are up to in the setup routine and which packages are currently being worked on.

Also included is a graphical bootup screen with status messages appearing below the word 'Ubuntu'. It's a little basic, but better than nothing.

Linux made simple

At first glance, nothing much has changed from Hoary Hedgehog (5.04). Gnome 2.12 replaces 2.10, but its refinements and improvements are mostly hidden in right-click menus



The chips are down, and Ubuntu holds all the cards (note the Beagle search tool running). With usability like this, who needs Mac OS X?

and other not immediately apparent features. If you're familiar with Ubuntu you'll know it makes a lot of choices for you about which applications are supplied. As mentioned in our review of Hoary (LXF68) we believe this works in Ubuntu's favour, as it reduces the feeling of being lost in among all the options.

The applications immediately available include *OpenOffice.org 2.0* (1.9.125), *Evolution 2.4*, Gnome's *BitTorrent* client, *GnomeMeeting*, *Rhythmbox*, *Totem*, *SoundJuicer* and *Serpentine*. This last package allows mastering of audio CDs from a range of audio codecs including OGG and MP3. Those of us in the UK will no doubt already be taking advantage of our fair use allowance and *Serpentine* will encourage this further.

New instructions

There have been a few improvements under the hood. Ubuntu now includes access to *GCC 4.0*, with the related benefits that this brings, although the kernel is still compiled with *GCC 3.4*. Breezy uses kernel 2.6.12, but you can

of course roll your own kernel with specific optimisation flags. The only thing to watch out for is that Ubuntu does not ship with any development tools installed as standard, so you'll need to use *Synaptic* to obtain the required tools. Unsurprisingly, then, Mono is not installed by default, but there are Ubuntu-specific packages available through *Synaptic*.

Support for PHP 5 is now included, although 5.1 is expected to be released by the time you read this. For Bluetooth fans, support for keyboards and mice is available out of the box.

Know thine enemy

With the release of Breezy, Mark Shuttleworth also let us know the name of what will become Ubuntu 6.04. It has been christened the Dapper Duck – dapper because it will have to be pretty smart to poach Windows users away from Vista, and Duck because... it begins with D. In what might be heard as a battle cry, Shuttleworth has asked for some real effort behind 6.04 to lure old XP users away from Windows.

GRAHAM SAYS...



"The Ubuntu team have also done amazing work to get ACPI working on many branded laptops, making this one of the best choices for Linux on the go."

This is all very well, but Ubuntu's need for everything to 'just work' makes us think that Ubuntu is trying to become more like Apple rather than Microsoft. Apple's philosophy is to provide software that people want to use rather than tinker with, and it could be argued that Ubuntu is mirroring this to a certain degree.

Also interesting is the launch of the Edubuntu distro, which makes heavy use of the Linux Terminal Server Project and is aimed at schools. LTSP support is now built in to Ubuntu as standard, and it will be intriguing to see where they go with this. Most schools and colleges in the UK are Microsoft-only, although some do use Linux for file and print purposes. There's a lot riding on Ubuntu in terms of bringing new users into open source.

All in all, this is a very positive release. Ubuntu gets better and better with each update and it will be exciting to see what the effort promised for 6.04 will produce. [LXF](#)

LINUX FORMAT VERDICT

FEATURES	9/10
PERFORMANCE	9/10
EASE OF USE	10/10
DOCUMENTATION	8/10

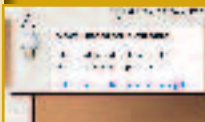
Solid, easy to use distro that every Linux user should try, and the pre-supplied applications are all sensible choices.

RATING 9/10



FEATURES AT A GLANCE

The helpful, if somewhat annoying updates pop-up is a good move for reassuring security conscious users.



This Add/Remove Application tool is a welcome simplification for Synaptic.



Easily arrange and burn any OGG or MP3 file to an audio CD with Serpentine.

