

Fedora Core 6 vs Ubuntu 6.10

Ubuntu's giant community and Shuttleworth's millions versus Fedora's giant community and Red Hat's... well, whatever *it* has. **Andy Hudson** is your referee...

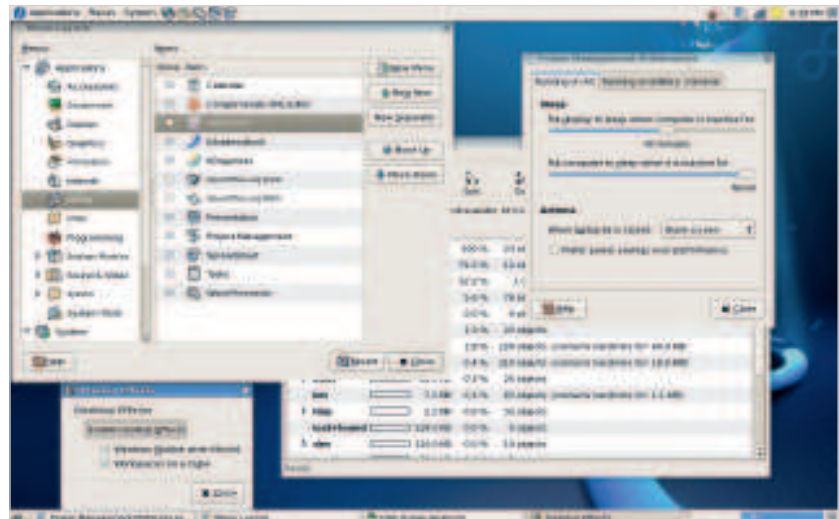
In brief...

Ubuntu
 » Easy to use, Debian-based distro. Also try Linspire, Mepis or Mandriva.
Fedora
 » Bleeding-edge distro with new technology. Also consider OpenSUSE.

We don't often pit two products head to head in a no-holds-barred slobberknocker, but this issue we've managed to snare both Ubuntu 6.10 (The Edgy Eft) and Fedora Core 6 and have been testing them like mad. In the blue corner we have the old guard – Fedora has been around for three years now as a standalone project, but it's built on years of Red Hat know-how stretching back to 1994. And in the brown-y-orangey corner we have Ubuntu, the distro that everyone has an opinion on even if they don't use it.

Fedora comes in at a whopping 3.3GB spread out over five CDs or a DVD. Whatever you want – KDE, Gnome, server packages, games – just click the option in Fedora's installer, *Anaconda*, and you're all set. Unfortunately, *Anaconda* doesn't include a means to repartition your hard drive, so you'll either have to use third-party software such as *Partition Magic* or write over an existing Linux partition. Oh, and if you're not even sure your computer will be able to handle Fedora, tough luck – you'll just have to suck it and see.

Ubuntu, however, comes on an installable Live CD, so you can just pop it in the drive and see instantly whether it will work on your machine. It also gives you the option of the Alternate install mode (which



» *Compiz* allows for some neat effects out of the box with Fedora Core 6.

is text-based rather than graphical) and Server mode (which provides a very quick LAMP deployment). If you want a window manager other than Gnome, though, you'll have to reach for a separate disc – Ubuntu, Kubuntu (KDE) and Xubuntu (*Xfce*) are separate distros.

Up and running

One of the promises that Mark Shuttleworth made to the Ubuntu

community was the delivery of *Xgl/AIGLX* as part of Edgy Eft. This doesn't seem to have happened, as neither technology is directly supported by Ubuntu. They are available to Ubuntu users via the Universe repository, but even then you need to do some tweaking in order to get them working – and the forking of *Beryl* from the main *Compiz* branch has fragmented the process even further.

Fedora takes a much more straightforward approach. *AIGLX* is enabled by default, and getting it working is as simple as installing the *Compiz* package, which provides a new Desktop Effects entry under the Preferences menu. Just open it up, click on the Enable Effects button and away you go, wobbly windows and everything. This out-of-the-box availability really gives Fedora the edge over Ubuntu (excuse the pun) and sets the bar considerably higher than we'd originally expected. For once, Fedora wins out in the ease-of-use stakes, something that may surprise you given Ubuntu's reputation.

Supply chain

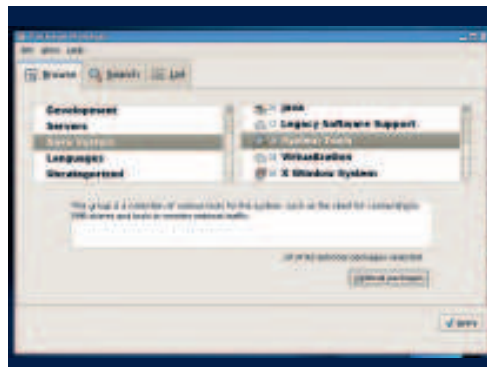
Of course no distro is an island: you will undoubtedly want to add to the installed software, and it's here that Ubuntu really puts the boot into Fedora. Actually, it's more like a wrestler grabbing a chair to

Package management compared



Apt-get

Ubuntu enables you to sort by popularity – if only all package management were this easy.



Pirut

In contrast, Fedora's *Pirut* is a blight on an otherwise excellent distribution.

The weigh-in

	Ubuntu	Fedora
Time to boot up*	41 secs	76 secs
Size of distro	One CD	Five CDs
Packages available	16,000	6,000
Time to install	15 minutes	25 minutes

*Pentium 4, 3.4GHz, 1GB RAM, ATI 9600 XT graphics card, 250GB SATA drive.

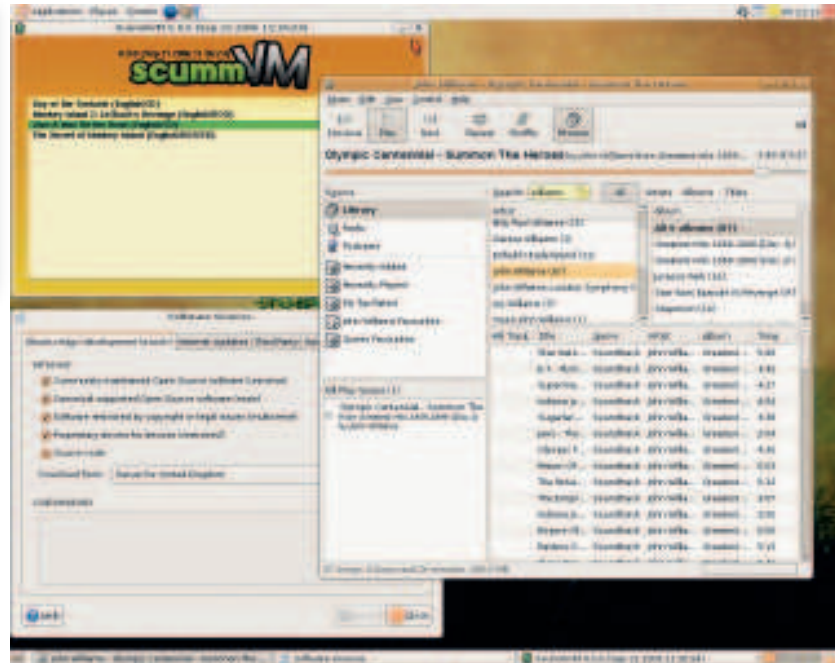
batter the stuffing out of his opponent. Ubuntu is derived from Debian, and benefits hugely from having *apt-get* underpin its package management. Fedora, on the other hand, relies heavily upon *Yum* to handle its army of RPMs. With all due respect to the *Yum* developers, *apt-get* is a vastly superior and much faster tool for retrieving and installing packages. Whether at the command line with **apt-get update** && **apt-get dist-upgrade**, or using *Update Manager* or *Synaptic*, *apt-get* responds quickly and provides the user with a powerful, easy-to-use mechanism to install new packages. A fair amount of work has gone into handling the configuration of

“Fedora is a must-have for anyone wanting to examine Xen.”

software repositories in Ubuntu, with an all-new *Software Sources* GUI tool. This tool enables you to easily configure the **sources.list** file, but also handles the importing of GPG keys. Full marks to Ubuntu for providing this out of the box.

In stark and rather cruel contrast, Fedora is lumbered with *Pirut*, the replacement for the long-hated *Add/Remove Packages*. *Pirut* first saw the light of day in FC5, and it has gone through some minor revision for FC6 – although it hasn't improved any. The fundamental problem is in its reliance upon *Yum* to do all the grunt work underneath. With the speed issues that affect *Yum*, it only drags down any application that calls on it, so *Pirut* is horribly slow. Another minor point is the difficulty that the end user has in accessing any of the RPMs on the CDs or DVD. Unless you specify that you want packages at the main installation, you are left to download any packages straight from the internet. This pretty much circumvents any benefits there are to having the huge software repository on a local optical disc, and is extremely frustrating. Using the Ubuntu-supplied tool is simplicity itself compared with having to work with Fedora.

The real winner for Fedora is the integration of *Xen*. Suddenly the disparaging comments made by Red Hat



» Thanks to their implementation of Gnome 2.16 and Cairo 1.2, Fedora Core 6 and Ubuntu Edgy Eft (shown here) have lovely vector-drawn widgets and crisp, clean lines.

about Novell's possibly premature release of *Xen* [Newsdesk, **LXF85**] become only too clear. Fedora has waited for the technology to improve, providing here a great tool to manage the hypervisor – named *Virtual Machine Manager* – and a number of other enhancements. This makes Fedora a must-have for anyone wanting to examine *Xen*. We can only drool in anticipation of Red Hat Enterprise Linux 5 and the *Xen* goodies contained therein.

Minor touches

For Ubuntu there is no such goodness on offer. Yes you can install *Xen*, and yes there are some utilities to manage it, but nothing as smooth and polished as in Fedora. Perhaps what has held back Ubuntu is the fact that Edgy has only had four months of development, as opposed to Fedora's six-month cycle. This is largely due to the overrun by Dapper (which resulted in a great distro) and perhaps Mark

Shuttleworth has been a little eager to keep to the October/April release schedules.

Although Shuttleworth named Ubuntu 6.10 the Edgy Eft in expectation that it might not be the most stable distro, we had little or no stability problems. In fact, it feels almost like a slightly enhanced Dapper, albeit without the three years of support. Hopefully Edgy +1 will see a greater shift in technology and functionality, but right now there is little to tempt a move from Dapper to Edgy. Usually we are effusive in our praise of Ubuntu, but this time it is more restrained. So is this a poor product? Just the opposite: Dapper Drake was an exceptional release and so is this. It might not feel as edgy as Fedora, but that is because the Fedora Project has had so much further to come.

In fact, Fedora users should upgrade to FC6 as soon as they can; the Fedora Project has produced a distro to be reckoned with. **LXF**

LINUX Verdict

Fedora Core 6	
Developer:	The Fedora Project
Web:	http://fedoraproject.org
Price:	Free under GPL
Features	9/10
Performance	9/10
Ease of use	7/10
Documentation	8/10

» Once again a solid distro, with added Xen goodness. Give Fedora a chance to impress and you won't regret it.

Rating 8/10

LINUX Verdict

Ubuntu 6.10	
Developer:	Canonical
Web:	www.ubuntu.com
Price:	Free under GPL
Features	7/10
Performance	10/10
Ease of use	10/10
Documentation	8/10

» The move from Dapper to Edgy is more a shuffle than a leap. Upgrade only if you have a burning need.

Rating 9/10