

LinuxMCE 0704 released, future plans for KDE integration revealed

LinuxMCE (Media Centre Edition) is an attempt at adapting the Linux GUI to suit the so-called 10-foot metaphor[.] The whole system exists as a comprehensive addon to the Kubuntu distro.

By Troy Unrau | Last updated August 16, 2007 5:48 PM CT

LinuxMCE (Media Centre Edition) is an attempt at adapting the Linux GUI to suit the so-called 10-foot metaphor for human-computer interaction. That is to say, using a computer from 10 feet away such as Media players or DVRs that live on a TV screen rather than a monitor. While I haven't figured out the rationale for their version numbering yet, they are making a fairly big deal about the release of LinuxMCE 0704 this week. The whole system exists as a comprehensive addon to the Kubuntu distro (that's the KDE version of Ubuntu for the Gnomies among us) and will run on everything that supports Kubuntu.



LinuxMCE is moving into an already somewhat crowded space in the media centre marketplace, populated by successful projects such as the XBMC (Xbox Media Centre), and the WindowsMCE, but it brings some new and exciting features that do not exist elsewhere. Their site lists a number of the more prominent features, but perhaps the most interesting is that it takes advantage of X.org's Composite extension to provide a user interface that lives seamlessly on top of whatever media is being actively used. Additionally, it can do some more interesting tasks such as control lighting or security systems. The LinuxMCE website has some additional screenshots showing the whole interface in action, as well as a very informative (but somewhat busy) video showing off its capabilities. Additionally, Fiire, one of their hardware partners, has made available a Wii-esque motion sensitive remote that they call the Fiire Chief.

This project is fully open source and takes advantage of a number of already existing open source projects internally, from Xine for video playback to MythTV for DVR functions, to the Asterisk project for telephony. It also has a strong KDE connection: in fact, this version of LinuxMCE is built to integrate into KDE 3.5.7, but the integration plans do not stop there. The functionality of the LinuxMCE interface is being built into KDE 4's new plasma workspace interface. This won't be ready for KDE 4.0 as it is no small effort, but it should be readily available by the time later versions of KDE 4.x are live. The final appearance that this integrated effort will take is not fully determined yet, but early designs suggest that there will be a toggle of sorts within the plasma interface that will flip the whole workspace from desktop mode to media centre mode. Aaron Seigo, the lead developer of the Plasma interface for KDE 4.x recently described some of their integration efforts.

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