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Elive Compiz Desktop

[First Look: Elive E17 Compiz](#)

Style and eye-candy for your Linux machine

If you've read the latest [Softpedia Linux Weekly](#) you probably remember the video clip of the week showing a lot of awesome desktop effects. Wait, don't leave just yet. I know you're sick of all those Compiz Fusion praising videos that are everywhere on the Internet but this time it's a little different. We're talking about a distribution and its desktop environment that didn't cross ways with Compiz. Until now. Yep, there is a special Elive E17 bundled with all the good 3D stuff. Knowing Elive's reputation of being one of the most beautiful and stylish distributions out there, what can really go wrong if you combine two of Linux's most valuable eye-candy providers?

After watching that video, we decided to put it to the test on one of our machines to see if all that buzz around it was really worth it. For more fun, the test PC was sort of a prehistoric one with 512 MB of RAM and an Nvidia GeForce FX 5200 (yeah...). Well, it wasn't just for fun, but it was also a very good way to evaluate Elive's performance under such extreme conditions.

Popped the Live CD in, chose to use the "nvidia-old drivers" at bootup and the desktop was up and running in a reasonable amount of time. If you didn't use the Enlightenment desktop manager before, you'll need some time to get the hang of it. All the menus are hidden under both mouse clicks (left and right) on the desktop. There is also a dock-like bar present on the bottom of the screen. An open window switcher is smartly placed in the top left corner of the screen. What's not so smart is the fact that you'll only see the icons of all your open apps (no text tooltip on mouse-over either) and if you have, let's say, three instances of Firefox you will be absolutely clueless about which is which until you actually restore them.

Eh, but what does that matter when you have the pretty ALT+Tab switcher right at your fingertips? Another annoyance I stumbled upon when trying out the advertised features was in the form of a non-working transparency-decrease keyboard shortcut. This led to a completely transparent window and I had to blindly look for the close button. Fortunately, it didn't change the default values for new windows so it didn't do much damage.

Leaving all bugs aside (it is an unstable release after all), the effects are really cool, especially on top of the artful desktop environment. Right from the login screen you know you're in for a classy trip to Linux. Everything feels professional and... expensive, yet not intrusive. All the text on screen is gorgeously shaped and really small. Hell, any smaller than that and you'd need to do some squinting. But it's perfect the way it is, allowing a much larger screen estate than any other distribution.

I have to say, I wasn't very impressed with previous Elive releases, since the interface elements felt sort of... crowded. But now I love it. Minimized, all the windows will fold to a paper plane and fly away, the drop-down menus will have random effects applied to them (like fire, fade, zoom, swirl) so you won't get bored right away.

All in all, being more of a "concept" distribution, it looks and behaves quite nice. You will eventually grow tired of all the 3D movement on the screen and want to shut it all down. The developers thought about this and included the CompizConfig Settings Manager panel where you can tinker with every effect.

I think Elive E17 Compiz is not only one of those Linux distributions you use to convert your less than tech-savvy friends to Linux, but also a cure for sore eyes. No doubt, it will cheer you up to see the light themeing on top of that peaceful wallpaper sky. By the time it will reach a stable version, I'm sure most of the bugs will be fixed and Elive E17 Compiz could become an efficient and productive distro that you may use on a daily basis. It is already the most beautiful one, that's for sure.

Download Elive E17 Compiz 1.9.22-4 right now from [Softpedia](#). Remember that this is an unstable release and it should NOT be installed on production machines. It is intended to be used for testing purposes only.