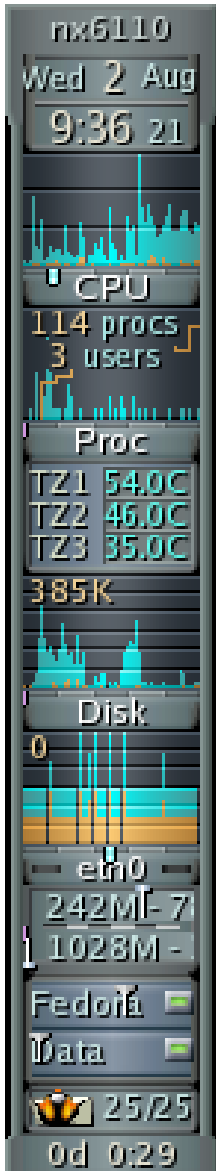


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## GKrellM Review

*The best system monitor for your Linux machine!*



When I first started to understand how my computer works, I began to monitor the system more often, trying to make sure that everything works just fine. I tried many programs that gave more or less information but, after a while I got bored of that. My computer works whether I use a system monitor or not and somehow I began to believe there's no point in wasting time and desktop real estate with those applications. Anyway, I'm always tempted to install system monitors on my desktop, and generally I do that. In Gnome I prefer to use one that docks nicely in the panel, called System Monitor; in KDE I prefer Superkaramba and there are also GKrellM and Torsmo, which I can use in any desktop environment. This review is going to describe GKrellM because this one is perhaps the most complete system monitor that works on all desktop environments pretty well and can be configured easily. I'm pretty sure that Superkaramba can do all this stuff, but it will be a lot harder to get the same info, plus the fact that Superkaramba is designed for KDE. GKrellM uses GTK2 and this allows it to support interesting themes and also integrate well with all the desktop environments. The looks are very important to a software like this; most of the people use it because it makes their desktop look sophisticated. The good news is that there is a wide variety of themes that can be used to match the equilibrium of your desktop. Themes can be changed easily using the Page Up and Page Down buttons on your keyboard. GKrellM has an impressive amount of features for a software of its kind and things actually get even better, because you can use plugins with it to extend its functionality. For example, you can use several multimedia related plugins for controlling the volume, XMMS and even for viewing a sound scope. There is an additional software called GKrellMd, which is actually a daemon that can be used to send data over TCP/IP to GKrellM. This daemon only depends on glib and doesn't even require a graphical interface for running it on a machine. It can be used for easy remote monitoring of server machines or other workstations. Since multiple instances of GKrellM can run, you can create a simple solution for remote monitoring multiple machines. I just found out about this feature and I'm pretty happy about it. Things get even more interesting if you have a Linksys router that you want to monitor with GKrellM. Some Linksys routers support Linux and on the Internet you can find third party firmwares that integrate gkrellmd. **Configuring GKrellM** is easy. Just press F1 when its window is selected and the configuration window will appear. Here you can see that everything is nicely arranged to provide ease of use even to inexperienced users. The first things I do after installing is tick the "Do not include on a taskbar" check box and choose another theme. I find the default theme of GKrellM very ugly, but, fortunately, there are many nice themes out there. The first thing can be done from the general menu, in the properties tab and the themes can be changed from the themes menu. In both menus you'll see that the last tab is an info tab. This is very useful and provides valuable information that really helps understanding this software and its features better. **What is displayed** in GKrellM can be chosen from the built-ins drop-down menu. I can't think of anything here that misses or that's extra. In my opinion, the best implemented feature here is the Internet monitor that is a highly configurable function to display TCP port connection. This is a unique feature among system monitors and can be really useful in some cases. The mail monitoring feature is very good too and has a lot of configuration options that can be performed easily. There are many features and sensors here, so it will take some time getting through all of them. I don't want to keep boring you any further, so I'll just say that some of them monitor the temperature, the fan speeds (if you have lm\_sensors kernel module loaded or a running mbmon daemon), the hard disk, the network interface, memory

and swap space, and the list goes on. For most, GKrellM plots charts about their activity and for some you can even setup alerts. The alerts are very important for a system monitor, but rarely one supports them. This feature is well designed, so you will not get a false notice and it can also be automated to take action for you in some circumstances. **The Good** The impressive set of features, combined with plugins and gkrellmd provide all its versatility. This software is excellent for both desktop computers and server machines. If I'll ever need a serious system monitor that displays everything nicely in a graphical manner, I'll use GKrellM. **The Bad** Its biggest drawback regarding the use on desktop computers is the support for themes. I think these themes are way too simple, because of the limitation to the rectangle shape. If it had the versatility that Superkaramba has for its themes, then it would blow its competitors away. **The Truth** This software is the most complete system monitor available for Linux at this moment. The rest of them can't come even close to the features and versatility present in this one. In the introduction of this review I said that I use different ones in KDE and Gnome. The reason behind this is that I don't really need one and I don't care much about a system monitor. If you want the best of the best, that works well on all environments, you should use GKrellM. If you want something that takes little space or comes in different shapes, then GKrellM is not for you. *The screenshots below show the GKrellM configuration window:* Take a sneak peak at some themes: