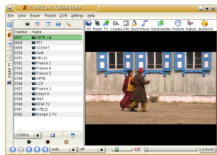


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Kaffeine Review

Caffeine for your desktop!

Most of us know that Microsoft developed Media Player to be able to handle as much media as it can so it would be a central application for multimedia. Some people blame them because they say it is a strategy for making a monopoly while others admire the features of the program. Perhaps you are wondering why I brought this up because this is Linux, here the software is free and some of you don't even want to hear about Microsoft. I brought it up because I know an application that is in a way similar to the popular and controversial Media Player. This application is Kaffeine. Kaffeine is a media player for KDE that can handle all kinds of media. Basically you can use it to play most of the media from the average hard drive. By default, Kaffeine uses xine as an engine and it tries to make the best of its versatility and power. It succeeds pretty well and if you don't like xine, don't imagine that you will not like this player too. Honestly I'm a mplayer fan but I really enjoy using Kaffeine because the interface is very user friendly and supports efficient handling of a lot of media, even though is not very good looking. **The Interface** First time you start the player you are presented with a **quick start window** that allows access to most of the common media available. There are several buttons that let you listen music from the HDD or CDs, to encode music, to play DVDs, to watch digital television and more. If you look to the left of these buttons you'll see several tabs. The second is the **player window**. While playing video files the content will be displayed here but while playing audio files, in this window you'll actually see several nice visualizations. Kaffeine uses goom as default visualization, which I think is one of the best available for Linux. The player window has an OSD and most of the common controls for DVDs. Right-clicking it will show a contextual menu. The next tab opens the **playlist window**. Here things are split in three panes. The pane on the left is for navigation through directories. The pane on the right is the actual playlist and the third one is about visualizations. You can add all kinds of supported media in the playlist. In case of movies, Kaffeine automatically detects if a subtitle is available and asks you to confirm if that's what you want to use. One of the best things about the way the playlist behaves is that for every song that is played it tries to show a cover. If none is available for that artist it goes online and retrieves several covers. You can see what it found in a window that pops up showing the thumbnails. Under the thumbs the resolution is shown so you can get the cover that is best for you. Several playlists can be created very easily in Kaffeine. The active playlist can be changed from the dropdown list that is in the upper part of the window. Under this playlist selector is a "filters" field. This simple thing is the one that helps us locate our media in large collections. Filtered results are shown as you type. The last tab, in my case, is for **Audio CD's**. It allows both listening while looking at the visualization and ripping audio tracks. Supported encoders include MP3 and OGG Vorbis. Kaffeine has a very nice feature which I find very interesting -network broadcast. Doing this is very easy and no knowledge at all is required. To create a stream you just have to click a button and select a port. Connecting to one is also very easy. Set the sender and the port and click the OK button. I've never seen an approach as straight forward as this. Another very cool complementary feature is the one for saving streams. It was never so easy to work with streams, until now. Most of the settings related to Kaffeine are actually settings for xine. A window for setting the engine parameters is provided and if you don't like some behavior of the engine it can be set from there. Settings related only to Kaffeine include the option to pause video when it's minimized, a system tray announcer and a DVB client. In my opinion the announcer needs redesigning because it is small and doesn't really stick out to "announce". Integration with Konqueror is excellent so you can preview files in it and it's also

possible to play streams embedded in web pages. This is excellent considering that, in Linux, sometimes you have to work for these features. **The Good**Supporting xine as a backend is very good because it is powerful and versatile. Support for streams is a very nice feature to have and the fact that streams can be saved easily is great. The graphical visualizations are really nice. **The Bad**Even though the interface is easy to use I don't really like it. I can't say why but I think it is kind of ugly. The announcer is important for me but the one in Kaffeine is not very usable. **The Truth**The truth is that Kaffeine is an excellent video player and a very good audio and DVB player too. The support for navigation through DVD menus and the integrated audio filters, a ten band graphical equalizer and video setting make it a very good player. With a little effort you can make play any type of media so I can't see why not using it. *Check out some screenshots below:*