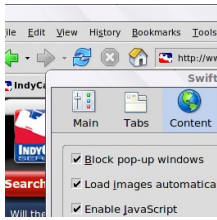


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By: Mihai Marinof, Linux Editor

[Swiftfox Review](#)

A binary optimized build of the Mozilla Firefox web browser for Linux.



Every person that spends an important amount of time on-line has at least heard of Firefox. Given the features, security level and availability for different platforms, it should come as no surprise that many users and organizations are actively using this browser. Firefox is available for Linux as well, and is a huge help for new Linux users that have been using Firefox in Windows and that aren't yet ready to use a rather complex Linux browser such as Konqueror. Another good thing one will notice about Firefox is its speed. Given how fast it is, it would seem unlikely that things could get any better than this. But fortunately, this has come to pass. Linux Firefox users (those that haven't yet heard – very few) will be thrilled to find out that there's an even better Firefox available, called appropriately enough, *Swiftfox*. Swiftfox is a binary optimized build of the Firefox browsers for Linux. It was created by Jason Halme and is a freely downloadable application. And for the optimization level to be even higher, specific builds for each of the supported microprocessor architectures have been created separately. The current version of Firefox is available, as well as the development version, each having specific builds. Moreover, the extensions, plugins and themes one has used with Firefox are fully compatible with Swiftfox. If both browsers are used within the same Unix user, the add-ons will be shared from one another, removing the need to re-install them all over again when switching to Swiftfox or back to Firefox. **So what is specifically optimized in Swiftfox? Binary code optimization.** The Swiftfox executable has been compiled with the highest level of compiler optimization, rather than optimization for binary size. The compiler supports various flags that will perform different optimization levels during the compilation process. Firefox is compiled with **-Os** flag (which enables only the optimizations that don't increase code size and also a few optimizations designed to reduce code size), while Swiftfox is compiled with **-O3** flag, which basically turns on all available optimizations. Binaries incorporate additional instruction sets supported by and also optimization specific to the microprocessor architecture. Moreover, Swiftfox has been compiled with a newer version of the compiler program (GCC v 4.0.4), while Firefox uses v 3.3.2. **Increased security.** Swiftfox offers better protection against buffer overflow attacks as a result of using **-D_FORTIFY_SOURCE=2** while compilation. Firefox has been compiled with an older version of GCC, which doesn't support this. **Removed or disabled features.** Pango is not included, allowing Unicode fonts to remain supported, but without certain extra features provided by it. Pango is an open source computing library for rendering internationalized texts in high quality, integrated into GTK+ 2. Moreover, Ipv6 DNS lookups are disabled. **Changed default preferences values.** HTTP pipelining is enabled by default. This is a technique in which multiple HTTP requests are written out to a single socket without waiting for the corresponding responses but unfortunately, it's only supported in HTTP/1.1, not in HTTP/1.0. The pipelining of requests results in dramatic improvement in page loading times, especially over high latency connections such as a satellite or wireless Internet connection. However, this preference can be enabled in Firefox 2.0 or one can use an extension called *Fastefox*, which provides a GUI to adjust these settings. **Hmm, whatever you say. But will I feel these changes?** Several magazines have evaluated Swiftfox in the context of the fastest browsers. But this isn't really the case. With or without pipelining, Firefox has the tendency to render pages a bit slower than Konqueror or even Internet Explorer. However, Swiftfox has been reported to have a shorter loading and page rendering time. So bottom line: Swiftfox is faster than Firefox, both in loading speed and website rendering. Unfortunately, the leader still is Konqueror running within KDE with times lower than both Firefox and Swiftfox. Swiftfox comes with XForms extension and

libunixprintplugin.so plugin preinstalled. Most of microprocessor architectures are supported but there are, however, a few unsupported, such as Pentium w/ MMX and PRO, K6, K6-3 and furthermore, a build for dual core processors hasn't been developed. The chart of supported processors shows that for dual core processors we should use the Prescott build but wouldn't it be even better if a separate build was to be released? Just a thought, I might be wrong though. **The Good**Swiftfox is a binary optimized build of the Mozilla Firefox web browser for Linux. Each supported microprocessor architecture has its own separate specific builds. Each build has been compiled with the highest level of compiler optimization and has additional instruction sets incorporated within. Overall, it does decrease the loading and page rendering times compared to Firefox. **The Bad**Although the loading and page rendering times are lower compared to Firefox, the difference between them mostly depends on the Internet connection. Furthermore, not all architectures are supported, so Swiftfox can't be used on all Linux systems. **The Truth**If you are a Firefox addict and you're running Linux, you should give Swiftfox a try. It will definitely amaze you. More or less however, depending on your cpu architecture and Internet connection. *Check out some screenshots below:*