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[Test Driving PCLinuxOS](#)

Radically Simple!

PCLinuxOS (also known as PCLOS) is an installable Live CD distribution based on the Mandriva Linux operating system. While PCLinuxOS tries to be a very elegant Linux desktop, on the other hand its main aim is to be easy to use by everyone who dares to try a Linux distribution. Looking back in time (a few years), PCLinuxOS project was started as a set of RPM packages created to improve Mandriva Linux distros (Mandrake was called at that time) and Texstar is responsible for the PCLinuxOS Linux distribution, which was created in 2003 as a fork of the Mandrake Linux 9.2. Today, the PCLinuxOS project is proud to have three more "brothers": MiniMe (a minimal Live CD/HDD install with a basic KDE desktop environment), Junior (a self booting Live CD with advanced hardware detection) and Big Daddy (aka PCLinuxOS Full Edition). But wait, PCLinuxOS has more relatives (because of a nice script, which comes with the system, that can remaster the whole distribution). Here is a list with some of them: Small Business Edition; Amarok LiveCD; VideoLinux; Ruby on Rails LiveCD; SAM Linux; CAE Linux; PCLOS MythEdition

The star of this review is the brand new release of PCLinuxOS, version 2007, which was announced by Texstar 3 days ago. The PCLinuxOS 2007 distribution is said to be an entire shift to a more modern code and because of this it will require a complete reinstall (that means it can't upgrade your previous stable PCLinuxOS version to this one). What's new? All the latest and up-to-date applications; Linux kernel 2.6.18.8; Xorg 7.1.1; GCC 4.1.1; K Desktop Environment 3.5.6; OpenOffice.org Suite 2.2.0; Mozilla Firefox 2.0.0.3; Mozilla Thunderbird 2.0; Frostwire; DeVeDe; Ktorrent; Amarok; MPlayer; Adobe Flash 9; Java Runtime Environment 6

Unfortunately, PCLOS 2007 does not ship with multimedia codecs or DVD decryption software (you know why), but I should mention that it comes pre-loaded with the latest 3D desktop effects proudly powered by the Beryl project. And if you want drivers for your video card, Nvidia and ATI drivers will be available after the hard drive installation. Enough said, let's get on board with PCLinuxOS 2007! Don't forget to put on your safety belt because this is one hell of a ride. If you tried openSUSE or Mandriva Linux before, you will recognize immediately the main boot screen, when you insert the PCLinuxOS disc into your optical drive, which is a copy-cat of those found in the previously mentioned distros. Of course, this one is a little modified with some extra options, like *VideoSafeModeFBDev* or *VideoSafeModeVesa* and the *Copy2ram* option which allows you to copy the Live CD in your computer's memory (WARNING: use the *Copy2ram* option if you have at least 1 GB RAM). If you don't do anything at this main boot screen, in a few seconds the CD will boot and you will see a very nice (I really love this one) boot splash. I love another thing about the boot splash, the ESC option. Damn, why doesn't Ubuntu have something like that? Why? I am sad right now when I think about that, I really miss that option, but let's cheer up and get back to PCLinuxOS test drive.

What's that? Ohh, very smart and intuitive guys! Before you see the login screen, PCLinuxOS offers you a little configuration wizard for your keyboard, clock (timezone) and network connection. On the login screen you will notice two users: guest and root. Now, the question will be: Why login as "guest" when you can have full access (that means you can do whatever you want) with the root account? I will not tell you the password for the root account, because it's right there, do you see it? ...in the left upper corner of the login screen. Welcome to.... PCLinuxOS! That's the famous KDE (K Desktop Environment) Linux desktop, ain't it glamorous? I really like what I see. The transparent taskbar, just two applications in the tray area, the clock is set on digital (just as I like it), the show desktop is there as it's supposed to be, and how can I not see the virtual desktops previewer? Simply beautiful. Come on, go ahead and click on the little 'PC' icon from the left-down corner, it's the main start menu (KMenu), which is completely rearranged by the PCLinuxOS guys to be very intuitive and easy to use. The main categories of software found in the KMenu are: Internet; Multimedia; Office; System

But don't be fooled, because each of these main categories has a lot of subcategories. On the Internet section you will find software for everything you'll ever need on your day to day Internet surfing sessions; software like Chat, File Sharing, Mail and News, Remote Access tools (VNC, Putty, etc), web browsers and

HTML editors. Do you love to draw? Do you like music? Or are you a movie freak? In whatever category you might place yourself, the Multimedia section offers you applications for image manipulation, audio/video playback, DVD creation software and programs for viewing TV channels around the world. If you intend to try/install PCLinuxOS for an office use, go ahead, don't waste any more time, because the Office section has it all, from calculators, dictionaries and virtual Post-it notes, to word processors, spreadsheets and presentations software. Last but not least, power users will find the System section a very useful one, as it will allow you to set everything, that's right... everything! What? You did not find your favorite applications? Or you need more? Don't you worry, because the sixth icon from the taskbar (yes, the one in front of the Firefox icon) will grant you access to more than 5000 applications. That is the Synaptic Package Manager, an application that permits you to install and uninstall software on your PCLinuxOS installation. Like Mandriva, PCLinuxOS offers its users the same smart Control Center, a place from which you can configure your entire PC, from File Sharing and Web Server setup, to Groupware, Online Administration settings and Boot options. Your monitor, mouse, keyboard, TV card, video card, printer or scanner can also be configured very easily from this wonderful Control Center. Moreover, the PCLinuxOS Control Center will allow you to configure Samba, NFS, WebDAV mount points and you can create/delete/resize hard disk partitions. But there are even more options in the Control Center, some of them for things you will probably never use in your entire PCLinuxOS experience. If you're not amazed at this point of what PCLinuxOS can do, this one will definitely shock you. PCLinuxOS includes a superb script, called [mklivecd](#), which allows you to remaster the entire PCLinuxOS installation into a Live CD that will contain all your settings, customizations and favorite applications. Simply open a console and type `mklivecd new.iso` or `remasterme`. For more technical and advanced details please visit the official [Remaster the PCLinuxOS LiveCD](#) wiki page. In conclusion, PCLinuxOS is a fine Linux distribution. It's pretty fast for a workstation and comes with a lot of software for your daily needs. If you decide to keep this baby on your computer, you have an 'Install PCLinuxOS' icon on your desktop which will guide you through a very simple wizard. But don't forget to take a look first on the [PCLinuxOS Hardware Database](#) website, to see if your hardware is supported by this Linux distribution. And if you still have no idea how to install it, the 'Installation Help' icon offers you a complete installation guide (with step-by-step screenshots). The guide will also help you keep your (full of malware) Windows installation, ain't that beautiful? Moreover, I suggest you to read the latest [PCLinuxOS magazine](#) (PDF format) to learn how to keep your current settings, if you already have a PCLinuxOS (or other Linux distro) installation on your hard drive. Radically simple!