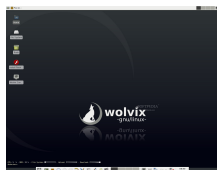


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Wolvix 2.0.0 Beta1

[Test Driving Wolvix 2.0.0 Beta](#)

An enjoyable Slackware distribution

After testing a lot of final, stable releases, we think it's time to provide some feedback on some projects that are still in development. So, let us welcome you to the Beta Testing Lab, where today we'll test Wolvix 2.0.0 Beta as thoroughly as possible.

Wolvix 2.0.0 Beta is a Linux distribution based on the popular Slackware 12.2. Built on top of the 2.6.27.9 Linux kernel, Wolvix comes with a lot of modern software packages. The much improved Xfce 4.6 is its default desktop environment, with a choice for two other more lightweight alternatives: Fluxbox and Openbox. But first of all, it's important to look at our test machine configuration:

- AMD K8 nForce 250Gb Motherboard
- AMD Sempron 2800+ Processor
- Nvidia GeForce FX5500 Video Card
- 512 MB RAM
- LG CD-RW/DVD-ROM Drive
- 17" BENQ T720 Monitor

Eager to see what this distribution has to offer (it's my first experience with Wolvix) I quickly downloaded the 643 MB Live CD ISO, burnt it to a disc and carefully placed it in the tray. The live system booted in a reasonable amount of time and I was ready to type in the username and password - you will find that they are "root" and "toor" by pressing the F1 key at the Live CD boot screen (not the login screen). It would be nice, though, if there was a little box in the login screen providing these credentials as most users will quickly press the Enter key at the boot screen and overlook the recommendation to press F1. Before proceeding with the install, I tested all the three available desktop environments and they all worked fine. Of course, if your machine is capable, you won't want to use anything other than Xfce 4.6.

So the live desktop appeared and honestly I like it. No bling-bling, no obtrusive flashy elements, everything is simple and clean. The top panel hosts the "Show desktop" and "Places" buttons, application & workspace switchers and the notification area. The bottom panel is a bit shorter and thicker and provides quick access to some of the most useful day-to-day applications as well as the complete menu. There is also another workspace switcher, which I don't understand, given the fact that there is already one at the top. A clock/calendar and a logout button are there too. A nice addition comes in the form of two small lines right above the bottom panel that provide useful system load information and the currently playing Audacious track. A customized Wolvix cursor is also a breath of fresh air. All in all, I'm very pleased with the interface.

But enough with the Live CD. The first thing I looked for was, obviously, the Install button, present in most distributions. Unfortunately, there is none in plain sight nor in the System entry of the main menu, but I finally located it on the second tab (HD-Install) of the interesting Wolvix Control Panel. The developers should really place it somewhere more convenient, like on the desktop or on one of the panels. Returning to the installation process, there are three options to choose from: Full, Frugal and USB Installs. The fourth

button will allow you to only install GRUB, useful in case of some other operating system ruining your bootloader. As you probably guessed, I chose to install Wolvix 2.0.0 Beta on the hard drive. After reading the usual development version warning and accepted to use it on my own risk, the Wolvix LiveCD Hard Disk Installer appeared and pleasantly surprised me with a window containing all the necessary installation steps so I wouldn't have to click next, next, next, next. As I didn't already have my partitions set up, I had to manually configure the hard disk drive with the included GParted partition manger. After doing that, I chose the boot device, root partition, an optional /home partition, swap, and the preferred filesystem. I checked the Install GRUB checkbox and I was done. The choice for filesystems is rather poor, as the only options are Ext2, Ext3 and ReiserFS. I was hoping to see Ext4 in there, as it serves me so well on my main systems both at home and at work. But Ext3 isn't bad either so I went with that. Next step: click the Install button and wait. Before the installation finishes, I was asked three more questions regarding the login type (command line or graphical user interface), framebuffer resolution and boot options.

I was quite surprised that I wasn't asked to create a normal user or at least change my root password during the setup process. A quick look on their website and I find a recommendation and instructions to change the root password right after booting into the hard disk install. So I had to login with the same root/toor combination. Fortunately, a quite visible red warning banner will appear on all filemanager windows so you won't forget that you could really mess up your system while using the root account. After changing your root password through the passwd command, you will, of course, want to create a normal user. There are two ways to do that: the terminal adduser command or the graphical user interface. For the latter, I opened the Wolvix Control Panel, went to the User Admin tab and clicked "Add User"; simple for anyone to create. I was then be able to logout and login with my fresh account. While doing that, I noticed that the time between clicking the logout button and being returned to the login screen was quite long.

Knowing I was testing a Beta release, I was expecting some problems to arise; as it turned out, my expectations weren't in vain. Let me explain: you will, of course, get to a point where you'll need to do some system changes that require the root password. When that occurs, the system asks whether to remember the password for the active session or save it in the keyring. Regardless of which of those two "remember" options you select, the second time you want to access root-enabled applications, they will not work. A "Granting rights" window will appear on the panel for a few seconds, nothing will happen and a logout will save you from that. So, it's best to not let the system remember your password. The otherwise powerful Wolvix Control Panel also has a bug that freezes the application when trying to access the "Configure X-windows" setting.

Wolvix 2.0.0 Beta is quite bleeding-edge having all software packages at their latest versions. Having my wired network connection automatically configured, I ran a system update and was very pleased to see Firefox 3.0.8, GIMP 2.6.6, Pidgin 2.5.5 or FileZilla 3.2.3. Wolvix 2.0.0 Beta does a very good job in providing a lot of tools necessary in both work and home environments. All my basic office needs were covered by Abiword and Gnumeric, while NoteCase Notes Manager, Osmo Personal Organizer and HomeBank made me more efficient. Internet-related applications include Deluge BitTorrent Client, Liferea Feed Reader, Linux DC++, Thunderbird and XChat IRC client so I quickly had access to all of the Internet's corners. The Flash Player isn't installed by default, but a handy desktop icon quickly resolved that little problem and I was able to speed through the web. The Multimedia section, that perfectly handles all popular audio and video formats, is certainly not modest, and I was offered more than one choice for performing each task: Audacious and Exaile, Kino and Avidemux, MPlayer and Xine, gtkpod - an iPod manager,

several CD burning/ripping applications, a subtitle editor and many more. The programming section is covered by Bluefish Editor, Glade Interface Designer, KompoZer Web Editor, Meld Diff Viewer and SciTE Text Editor. Moreover, the Gslapt package manager is a great gateway to many other useful interesting applications so I could customize Wolvix the way I wanted.

Speaking of installing software, I desperately needed the graphics driver for the Nvidia card, as the overall desktop performance is quite sluggish without it. A quick "nvidia" search in Gslapt and I was ready to install both the kernel module and driver. That said, you will still need to know which version to install for your card. Our Nvidia FX5500 needed the 173 legacy drivers to work properly. Wolvix's website provides the necessary information so you're not left out in the open. After installing the video driver and activating it through the nvidia-xconfig command, I noticed that compiz was already installed and, obviously, I wanted to test it: fired up a terminal, "compiz --replace" and *poof*, my window decorations disappeared. No luck there... I restarted the computer and recovered my precious title bars. If you're still craving for at least some modern effects, the Window Manager Tweaks will grant you that wish and offer you some transparency for your windows and panels.

When I plugged in a USB stick, Wolvix instantly recognized it and placed an icon on the desktop. I was happy to see that as I couldn't find a way to connect to other Windows machines in my network, though the Samba package was installed.

All in all, I really enjoyed testing this distribution. Not being a big fan of Slackware, I didn't expect to be so pleasantly surprised by some aspects. Also, Wolvix 2.0.0 makes it way easier to see what Slackware is about. Surely, there are still things that need to be polished, but I was very impressed with the up-to-date software selection and the easy install process. Hopefully, by the time Wolvix 2.0.0 final is released, all the inconveniences will be taken care of.

Update 04032009: Contrary to what I initially observed, information regarding the login credentials is available during the bootup process. I have updated the article to address this.