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VLC Review

Entertain yourself!

VLC is a media player that can handle a variety of files, from MPEG-1 to DivX, mp3 and audio CDs. It is open source off course and multi - platform. It also supports various streaming protocols. VLC was formerly known as the VideoLan Client. **Installation and Usage** There are precompiled binaries for various operating systems like Linux, Windows, Mac OS X and even Windows CE. For other less popular operating systems (Solaris, FreeBSD , NetBSD or QNX) there are no precompiled binaries. You must get the source code and the necessary libraries and compile it yourself. Installing VLC on Fedora was very easy with YUM, just a few mouse clicks. After installation, to start the player type VLC in the command-line or use the shortcut in the K Menu, if you use KDE that is. The first visual impression is that it's very simple, without any of the clutter of other players. VLC has several interfaces: a cross platform interface for Linux and Windows called wxWidgets, an interface that supports skins for Windows and Linux and a MacOS X native interface. On Linux the default interface is wxWidgets, which is simple and intuitive. There are the Open, Play, Stop, Play Faster, Play slower, Next play list item, Previous play list item buttons, the menu of the program where you can access various setting and the volume bar. If you have used other media players (and you certainly have used at least one) the interface will be familiar. To play a file use Ctrl+O or open the File menu and click the Quick Open File item. You can also Drag&Drop your file on the VLC window. The result is the same. If you have an optical disk (CD, DVD) that you want to play use the Ctrl+D shortcut. Choose the disk type and select the drive which contains your disk. You can start the DVD from a given title or chapter by using the Title and Chapter options. Playing streams is just as easy as the rest. Use the shortcut Ctrl+N, type in the desired URL and click OK. One interesting feature of VLC is the fact that it can save a stream to a file. You can save whatever VLC can read. You also have the possibility to re-encode the stream. Check the Stream output option and click the Settings button near it. The window with the transcoding setting and encapsulation method appears. You can set the settings as you wish here. If you have an acquisition card VLC has the possibility to play from it. Use the Ctrl+A shortcut to get to the setting window. To choose the device for video and audio capture use the Video device name and Audio device name selectors. The Advanced options button will give you access to more setting, such as frame rate, the sample rate, the hue, brightness and color level. VLC supports many kinds of subtitles. By default subtitles are disabled. The player can read subtitles for DVDs, SVCDs, OGM files and MKV files. It also supports the following types of subtitles: SSA, Vobsub, Sami, SubRip, MicroDVD but it does not support srt ones. Like all the other media players, VLC has a playlist. You can access it by clicking the playlist button on the main window. You can add files, directories and URLs to it. Also you can sort the play list or shuffle it. The playlist supports several playback modes: random play, repeat one item and repeat all the items. If you want to play some file you can search your playlist for it. If you right-click an item in the list, a new menu with four options will appear: Play, Preparse, Delete and Info. If you click info you will be shown various details about the file. Ctrl+G will activate the Extended GUI. This will give you access to the image options (hue contrast, gamma, saturation and brightness), the 10 band equalizer and the audio filters. VLC has two audio filters. The Volume normalization filter prevents the audio output power from going over a defined value while the Headphone virtualization filter provides sound spatialization, giving the feeling of a 5.1 speaker set when using a headphone. The Preferences window is the equivalent of a control panel. It gives you access to a lot of setting from video codecs, demuxers to hotkeys and subtitles. But beware, you must know

what you are doing when you modify some of these settings, especially the video codecs setting, which will affect the image quality. These settings are best left to more experienced users. VLC is robust; it does not skip frames like some other players out there and offers great quality and many features. Users will be satisfied. **The Good** VLC is a good player and it can play about any audio and video format you can think at. It can handle High Definition content very well and also works great as a streaming server and video transcoder. **The Bad** It doesn't support real media; it's the only major media it can't play right now, but still... It also has problems with srt subtitles. **The Truth** VLC is surely one of the best players out there that can play almost all the media formats, record streams and encode different types of video. You might want to check it out if you're ok with 'The Bad' part.