

# SolydXK 201401

Does the world really need yet another Debian-based distro? Well, the answer is yes, as **Mike Saunders** discovers.

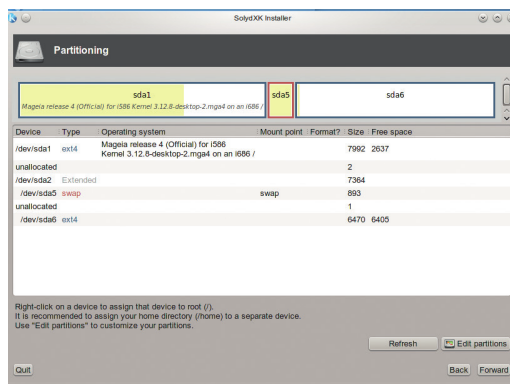
**S**olydXK is an unassuming distro that could very easily have missed your radar. After all, how many other desktop-oriented Debian spin-offs are doing the rounds? We've lost count now. But after two readers mentioned SolydXK in last issue's letters page, we had to take it for a spin. And we're glad we did, because its release model could become the norm for desktop distros in the future.

Right now, there are two main ways that distro makers approach releases: some, like Ubuntu and Fedora, create one or two big releases each year. Everyone waits patiently for several months and then does the big upgrade to get all the hottest new software. It works fairly well, but sometimes it's a drag having to wait. Then there's the rolling model, as used prominently by Gentoo and Arch, where you get new software as soon as it's released by the original developers. This lets you live on the bleeding edge, but things can occasionally break due to a lack of testing and integration.

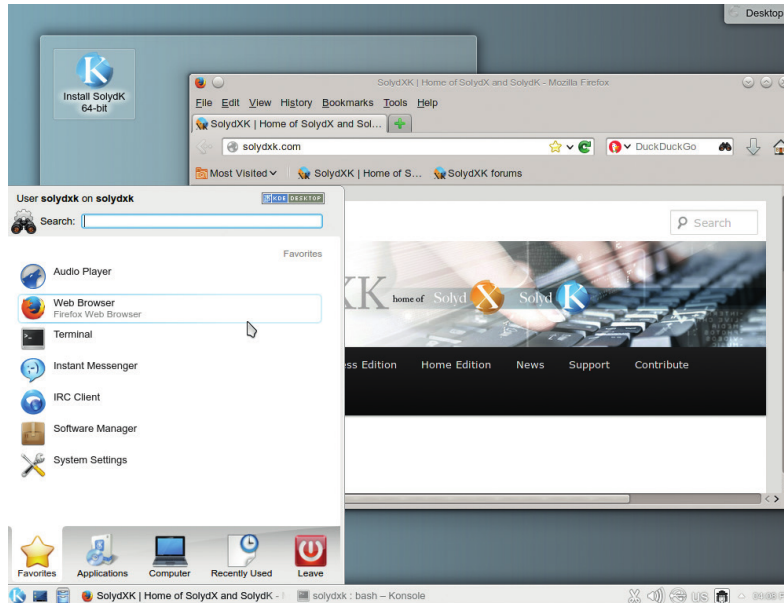
SolydXK is a half-way house; you only have to install it once, and then every three months you'll receive Update Packs to get the latest software. So there are no fanfare-surrounded major releases where everyone rushes to upgrade – you just get the newest programs in well-tested bundles. This is a great approach, and hope to see it adopted by more desktop Linux distributions.

## What's in the box?

Two versions are available: KDE and Xfce (we tested the former here). In use it's a fairly vanilla Debian testing-based distro with a stock KDE 4.12 installation, supported by LibreOffice 4.1, Firefox 26 and various other desktop apps. VLC is included together with a bunch of media codecs, so the distro can handle most formats from the get-go. Along with Synaptic, Linux



SolydXK's Mint-based installer is quick, easy to use and versatile enough for power users.



Some people will like the distro's use of a plain KDE setup, but we'd like to see a bit more individuality shine through – or you could follow page 84's tutorial and tweak it yourself.

Mint's attractive Software Manager is included, and the installer is also based on Mint's.

There are a few rough edges: the presentation and theming isn't very slick, and some work could be done to tidy up the menus (having both Package Manager and Package Installer in the System menu could confuse new users, for instance). But the SolydXK team has demonstrated real commitment to the project, with installation videos on the website, a growing community, and annual reports explaining how things are progressing.

Time will tell if the Upgrade Packs work as intended and the goal of "you don't have to reinstall, ever" can be achieved. But it's certainly a distribution to keep an eye on, and if it gathers enough interest it could make some of the others (with their traditional timed-interval release cycles) start to look rather old-hat. 

## DATA

**Web**  
www.solydtk.com  
**Developer**  
The SolydXK team  
**Price**  
Free (various open source licences)

**"The SolydXK team has demonstrated real commitment to the project."**

## LINUX VOICE VERDICT

A promising distro with a fresh approach to updates – it just needs more personality of its own.

