Gnome 3.12

Do you have a shiny touchscreen laptop? **Ben Everard** thinks
he may have found the right desktop environment for you.

Gnome 3.12 is the latest stable incarnation of the Gnome 3 desktop environment, which includes the Gnome Shell desktop and a range of core applications, most of which have seen some form of improvement.

One of these integrated apps is the Videos application, which has been given a thoroughly modern look with floating controls and links to online video sources. In fact, integration with online services seems to be a focus point for the Gnome team at the moment. Support for the Pocket app, which is a way for users to save online content for later perusal, has been added in a number of places, and Photos now supports importing pictures from online sources such as Facebook.

Better integration

It seemed to take a long time to migrate the Gedit text editor from the old Gnome 2.x style to Gnome 3, but it's there now. This means it fits in better with the rest of Gnome 3 and users of the desktop environment should feel more at home in it. Of course, it does mean that Gedit now looks out of place on other desktop environments, but as it's part of the Gnome suite, we can't really criticise it for that.

The Gnome lust for simple names has really reached a zenith (or nadir, depending on your point of view) with the naming Software. This isn't a generic term for the stuff that runs on your computer; instead it's the name of the Gnome software centre, which

> "**Gnome 3.12 has the most attractive default state of any Linux desktop.**"

Application folders in Gnome 3.12 could herald the start of a shift back to a hierarchical application menu.

has received an overhaul and is getting closer in terms of function to the Ubuntu Software Centre, which in our opinion is the best of such applications for Linux. It still has a little way to go, but it's looking good so far.

Support for high resolution (HiDPI) screens is significantly better than in 3.10, and it's certainly worth taking a look at if you're struggling to get the best out of your expensive monitor. This comes as the Gnome team have been doing excellent work in making the desktop look more beautiful. We may even go so far as to say that Gnome 3.12 has the most attractive default state of any Linux desktop.

Tip-top for tablets

Using the Gnome 3 live CD released by the Gnome foundation should be the best way to try out the desktop environment. However, unfortunately we found it a terrible experience. It completely crashed on us on several occasions forcing a reboot. Hopefully this won't be an issue once it's made its way onto mainstream distros, but we can't yet say for sure.

Gnome 3 divided opinion on its release. This reviewer really didn't like Gnome 3 when it first came out, but it's now maturing into a usable system. It's at its best on touchscreen devices (desktops and laptops rather than tablets and phones), which might seem a little excessive now but given the large proportion of computers selling now with touch screens, it's good to see that one Linux desktop environment is taking on the challenge.

Of course, the majority of Linux machines still have traditional non-touch screens. The Gnome team have managed to create a desktop that works well with both mouse and touch. Unfortunately, it's usually compared to desktops that work really well on one or the other (such as Cinnamon with a mouse or Android with touch). Those have both had a head start, but Gnome 3 is catching up in both areas. For some people, it's already the best option and we can see why, but none of us at Linux Voice are quite impressed enough to make the switch yet. Everything still seems to take one or two more clicks than it does on other desktops, and that's still enough to put us off. However, it has reached the stage where we're now considering it as an option, and that's something we didn't think would happen when Gnome 3 came out. **LV**

LINUX VOICE VERDICT

Gnome 3.12 doesn't contain enough to persuade us to switch, but users will appreciate the improvements.

★★★⯨★