

# Linux Mint 17 Qiana

This new release of the world's favourite desktop distro will be supported until 2019 - unlike Roy Batty. **Mike Saunders** takes a look.

## DATA

### Web

www.linuxmint.com

### Developer

The Linux Mint Team

### Price

Free to download

There used to be a time when the Linux desktop was a constantly in-progress revolution, with improvements and regressions flowing in at a breakneck rate, and each new distro release felt substantially different to the one before. Those were good days, despite the number of installations and re-installations we all did, being desperate as we were to experience the cutting-edge of everything Linuxy.

Mainstream desktop Linux has matured since then; it's stable, it does a fantastic job, and most of us don't need radical changes every six months. We just want things to work, and get out of the way, leaving us to use our applications. Clement Lefebvre, the lead developer of Linux Mint, really gets this – so version 17 of his distro is rather conservative in nature.

Mint 17 is a Long Term Support (LTS) release, based on Ubuntu 14.04. This means that it will receive bugfixes and security patches until 2019, making it a

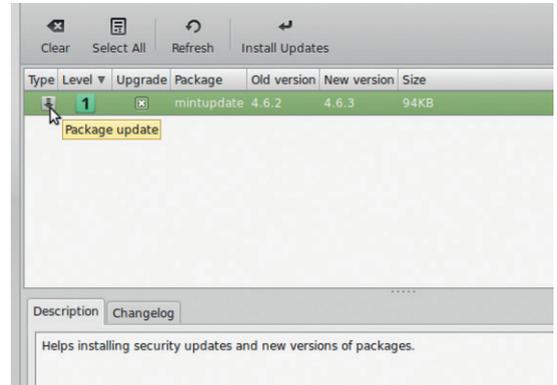
**“Clement Lefebvre and his team have refined the whole experience of using Linux Mint.”**

good choice for businesses and production environments. Lefebvre has also changed Mint's release strategy going forward: the next

major release, Mint 18, will be based on the next Ubuntu LTS version in 2016, while Mint 17.1, 17.2 etc will provide relatively small upgrades with newer versions of packages in the meantime. We really like this approach – it provides long-term stability with access to new applications periodically.

As mentioned, there aren't many whizz-bang new features in this release to coo over, but Lefebvre and his team have refined the overall experience of using Linux Mint. The Update Manager, for instance, has had an interface overhaul, providing more information

Mint 17's interface is largely the same as in previous releases (this screenshot shows the Cinnamon desktop).



The Update Manager now helps to distinguish between backports, security fixes and other types of update.

about packages to be installed, so you can see whether an update is a security fix or a backport of an application. It's also smoother in use, no longer waiting for NetworkManager or locking the APT cache.

The Driver Manager, meanwhile, can install drivers without access to an internet connection – it can use the boot media instead. This is a sensible move, because it enables many laptop users to get online straight away, and not have to plug in an Ethernet cable and download Wi-Fi drivers separately.

## Efficiency gains

There's now a single Language Settings tool that works across the Cinnamon, Mate and Xfce desktops, while the Welcome screen no longer has to load WebKit libraries, so it starts more quickly and uses less RAM.

Desktop software-wise you'll find Cinnamon 2.2.13, Mate 1.8, LibreOffice 4.2.3, Firefox 28, Thunderbird 24.4, VLC 2.1.2 and Gimp 2.8.10. This is all built on a base of kernel 3.13.0 and X.Org Server 1.15.1, compiled with GCC 4.8.2. Of course, everything in the Ubuntu 14.04 repositories is also available to Mint 17 users, and a lot of documentation can be shared between the distros too.

Mint 17 isn't sexy or exciting, and if you're a Mint 16 user you may be tempted to avoid the upgrade. But it's well worth it, both to get the latest software updates, and to know you'll be secure for many years down the road.



## LINUX VOICE VERDICT

Mature, reliable and with five years of support ahead. It's boring, but for an LTS that's exactly what we want.

