

GNOME 3.14

Will the eighth revision of Gnome 3 finally convince **Mike Saunders** to switch his desktop, or is it too little, too late?

DATA

Web
www.gnome.org
Developer
The Gnome Project
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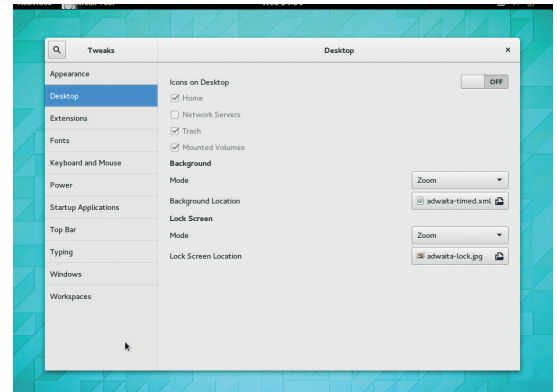
Gnome 3, with its controversial redesign, arrived back in April 2011. There was a huge amount of uproar at the time, with many users threatening to switch to Xfce, others forking the Gnome 2.x codebase into the Mate desktop, and flamewars aplenty on the internet. Here we are three years – and eight revisions – later, so what has changed since those days? Has Gnome 3 finally been fleshed out into a usable desktop for everyone?

We'd say: almost. Many of us on Team LV weren't fans of Gnome 3 when it first arrived, and the way developers had removed features *en masse* left us with deeply furrowed brows. Sure, there's an argument that too many features and options can leave users confused, and when people at work end up tweaking every minutia of their desktop it can be a nightmare for support staff. So Gnome 3's position was: fewer options, but sensible defaults.

Sticking to the plan

And you know, we do admire the resolve of the Gnome team in this respect. They've taken a huge amount of flak in recent years, including from us, but they've battled on, refined, tweaked, and even made concessions (such as the Classic mode, which provides a slightly more traditional desktop). Some distros have stuck with it through the most difficult times, and the desktop still has an army of fans today.

So, what's new in Gnome 3.14? At the time of writing, it was too new to be included in any major distro release – but fortunately, a Fedora live image gave us the chance to explore it. And without doubt, Gnome 3.14 is the best version yet: since 3.12 the



gnome-tweak-tool is still a lifesaver if you want to customise the desktop beyond some very limited options.

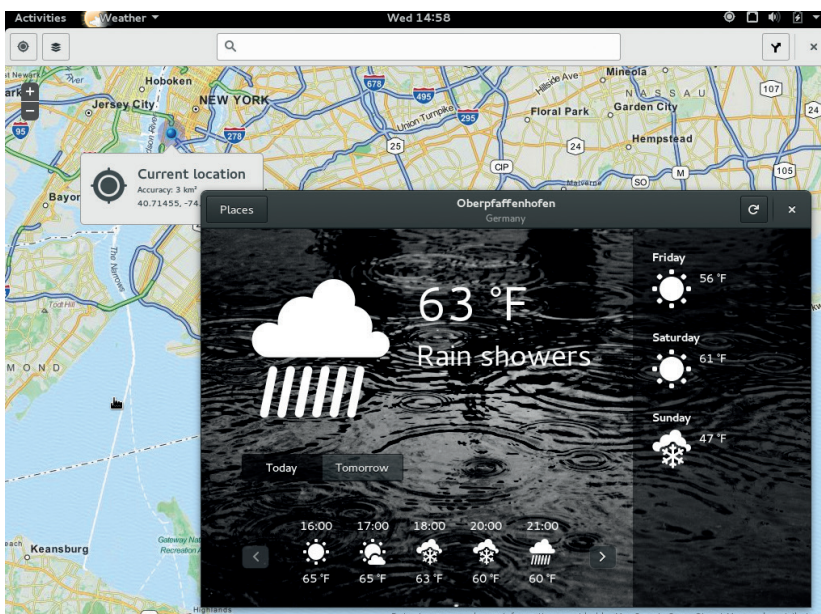
desktop has seen over 28,000 source code changes from 871 developers. Some of the changes are cosmetic, but others go deeper.

For instance: new animations and multi-touch gestures have been added; there's a new default *Gtk* theme, and the *Evince* document viewer has seen an interface overhaul. More usefully, there's now support for captive portals (so when you connect to a Wi-Fi hotspot that requires web-based authentication, the relevant page will be displayed automatically), while the *Photos* app supports Google/Picasa integration.

The Maps program has received some updates, such as geolocation support, but this appeared to be broken in our testing: despite our best efforts, it consistently showed us as being in Manhattan, rather than our real location of Bavaria. The revamped Weather tool didn't suffer the same problem, though, and managed to work out (roughly) where we are.

Overall, the updates and dabs of polish are all welcome, and we could see ourselves using Gnome 3.14 as our daily desktop. But some things still irk us, such as the need to install *gnome-tweak-tool* to customise parts of the desktop's appearance, and the forced minimalism in some of the programs (too often we come across an unfamiliar toolbar button that doesn't have a tooltip, making it all guesswork). It's much better than it used to be, for sure, but after spending a few days in Gnome 3.14 we still had a rather claustrophobic feeling. But the developers are listening, and that's what matters most.

Weather has a decent shot of guessing our location, whereas Maps thinks we're in Manhattan for some reason.



LINUX VOICE VERDICT

The best release yet of the 3.x series, with welcome improvements – it still feels restrictive in places though.

