

DISTROHOPPER

Our pick of the latest releases will whet your appetite for new Linux distributions.

ReactOS

Like Windows, but open.

OK, this isn't Linux – it's not even based on Unix – but it is a free operating system that you can try out. ReactOS is a clone of the Windows NT kernel used in Windows XP, and some of the API. This means that in theory, you should be able to use ReactOS just like a Windows system: install the same drivers, run the same software, etc. However, in practice, the implementation is not complete enough to allow you to do this. You can run the simple tools that come with the OS, but not much else. *Wine* offers a much better chance of being able to run Windows software without a full Windows install. Even though *Wine* and ReactOS share code, *Wine* has a much better success rate.

This is a shame, because if the team had been able to create a fully working system by the time Microsoft stopped support for Windows XP, they may have found many new users. As it is, the project might have missed its chance to become mainstream.



Don't tell Linus we said this, but some games just don't look right when running on Linux.

Just because a project isn't mainstream, that doesn't mean it's not interesting. Booting up ReactOS feels like taking a trip back in time – its visual style probably has more in common with Windows 95 and 98 than XP. ReactOS does, of course, have

Minesweeper, the game that killed millions of man-hours worth of office-worker time in the last years of the previous millennium. Perhaps it's not the best reason to get a new OS, but for us, this dose of nostalgia made it worth booting up a virtual machine.

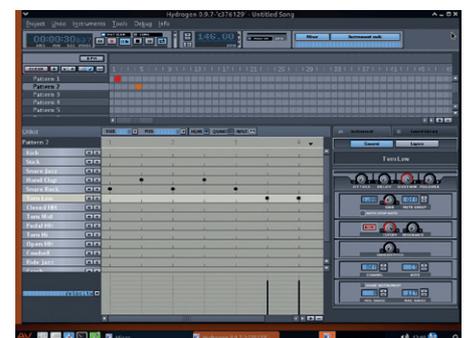
AV Linux

The distro of choice for media creators.

AV stands for Audio Video, and this is a distro built for creating music and videos. It's jam-packed with software to help you do this – both free and commercial, but this isn't simply a distro created by installing particular packages on a base system. AV Linux not only curates the software, but also the configuration of the underlying Debian build. Much of the software – including the kernel itself – is built specially for AV Linux, and this is what makes the distro special. The result is a system that's less flexible than raw Debian, but far more suited to content creation.

This distro is probably better known for audio production than video editing. However, it is probably the best distribution of Linux for either task. There are also some useful tools for image editing, but it doesn't stand out as significantly better than other distros in this area.

If you're fed up of struggling to get a decent audio setup on Linux, AV Linux is for you. It's also great if you want to discover the best audio or video software without having the hassle of configuring the sound setup to make it work, and it uses the intuitive, smart Xfce desktop.



Fear not the configuration of *PulseAudio*, for it has been done already.

AV Linux also stands out because of its excellent documentation. You'll find several manuals as PDF files on the desktop to guide you through most things, and help you understand how AV Linux works.

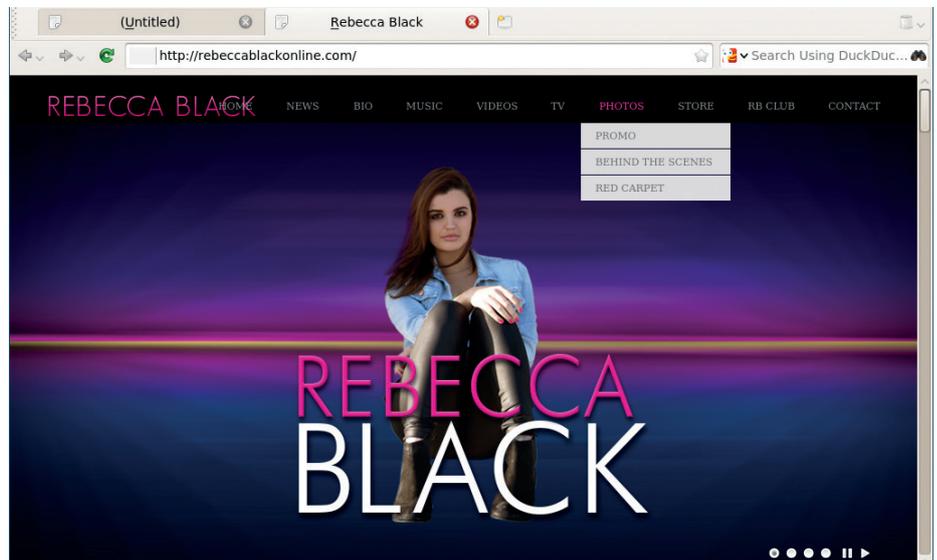
RebeccaBlackOS

Friday, Friday ... we'll stop there.

Yes, this distro really is about the teen popstar who was briefly famous for the song 'Friday'. No, that doesn't mean you can discount it as an uninteresting distro. Despite its (let's be polite and say) unusual inspiration, RebeccaBlackOS (RBOS) has been pioneering Wayland on desktop Linux.

Wayland – the next-generation graphics server that should replace X Windows on almost every Linux distribution other than Ubuntu – has been around for quite some time, and is already in use on Jolla phones and some smart TVs. However, there are currently very few ways of trying it out on desktop Linux, and the RBOS live CD is by far the easiest (the second easiest is through Maynard on a Raspberry Pi: <https://github.com/raspberrypi/maynard/wiki>).

If you're anything like us, you'll have heard so much about how Wayland is the future of Linux that you'll be itching to try it and find out what the fuss is about. RBOS is the solution to this problem. It's got quite a range of software using the *Qt*, *GTK* and *EDL* (Enlightenment) widget toolkits, so you can



If you can look past the artwork, RebeccaBlackOS is the best way of trying out Wayland.

get a good idea about how each of them are working. Perhaps the most impressive thing about RebeccaBlackOS is just how normal it is. OK, the graphics are a little odd, but that's a small issue compared to getting the

display server running. Although it lacks much polish, it does seem to handle basic computing tasks without any problems, and this bodes well for the future of Linux on the desktop.

Linux Mint 1 (Ada) Linux Mint has changed the nature of desktop Linux, but how did it start?

We're starting a new historical section to Distrohopper, where we look back at major releases of yesteryear. The first one to get dug up and dusted off is Linux Mint 1, aka Ada. Technically, this version never made it out of Beta (2.0 was the first stable version of Mint). However, it was with this unstable version that the journey began.

KDE version 3.5 greeted us after we booted Linux Mint 1. This came as a bit of a surprise, because Mint is most famous for its Gnome versions (and later Mate and Cinnamon). However, Mint made the switch to *GTK* with version 2.

For the most part, it's a fairly standard KDE desktop for the time. *KOffice* took up office duties, *Konqueror* served as a file manager, and all the other usual tools that begin with K are in their usual place. Outside of the KDE suite, *Firefox 1.5* serves as web browser, and *Gimp 2.2* takes up image editing duties.

On the whole, it doesn't feel too dated, despite being eight years old. The biggest things that stand out graphically are the lack of anti-aliased fonts and the inability of the ancient version of *Firefox* to render any modern web page. The use of floppy disk images on the install icon is another clue that this isn't from the current decade.

Linux Mint became known as one of the best-looking distros, so it's surprising to see such a graphical faux pas as an RSS reader along the full width of the screen under the taskbar. It's quite impressive though that the two RSS feeds picked back in 2006 still work (OSNews and Distrowatch).

Clem (the founder of Linux Mint) talks about the early releases in a blog post at: <http://segfault.linuxmint.com/2014/01/ada-barbara-bea-bianca-and-cassandra>.



Why oh why is that RSS feed there?