

# Fedora 15 review



In a post I wrote on February 7, I said I moved from Fedora 14 to Linux Mint Debian. Well, less than two weeks later I moved back to Fedora 14. I'm familiar with the Fedora way of tweaking the system, and I just couldn't figure out how to set up certain things in Linux Mint Debian. Fedora is not only cutting edge, it's more user friendly than Debian based distros for technicians in my opinion.

I've been with Fedora since Fedora Core 3 and have witnessed significant improvements with every new version. However because Fedora 15 comes with Gnome 3 as the default desktop environment, I had some misgivings when I upgraded. I knew that Gnome 3 is a radical departure from Gnome 2, but I wanted to at least give it a shot.

## **Improvements over Fedora 14**

- Since upgrading my AMD Phenom quad core CPU to a Phenom 2 six core CPU, Fedora 14 would often hang during boot at udev. I had to press the ESC key a couple times to continue the boot process. This doesn't happen anymore in Fedora 15
- While playing music and running Skype at the same time in Fedora 14, a Skype login by one of my Skype friends would pause the music player. The next login by somebody else would start it again. Needless to say this was a bit irksome but now with Fedora 15 the problem seems to be fixed.
- So far I haven't felt a need to install the third party proprietary Nvidia video driver for my Nvidia card. The default open source driver seems to be doing an acceptable job. It plays Youtube videos at full screen without obvious jerking of motion.
- LibreOffice seems better than OpenOffice in some ways. I used to get weird behavior from OpenOffice Calc of menus popping up though I was only filling in the cells with my data. This didn't happen in LibreOffice. However, I could not read the Japanese fonts in a .docx file, a problem I didn't have in OpenOffice.

- Startup and shutdown, especially shutdown, is significantly faster.

## **What I don't like about the default Fedora 15**

I think the developers of Gnome 3 made a major mistake in such a radical change from Gnome 2. All my cool Gnome 2 applets now gone forever! The coolest thing about Gnome 2 for me was that it was a mixture of the look and feel of both Windows and Macs. Gnome 3 is nothing like either. How can I therefore recommend Windows users to try it when I couldn't even figure it out? Gnome 2 made it less painful for a Windows user to switch to Linux. The analogy of the Gnome 3 interface is that it makes it easier for users to access apps from smaller screens. Fine. Why not then have it only for hand-held devices? Why use such an interface now when PC screens as large as 24 inches have become easily affordable by most users? Hardly anybody these days has a screen size smaller than 15", especially if they use a Desktop PC.

## **Alternatives to Gnome 3**

I tried out KDE4 for a few days. It was certainly more intuitive and comfortable for me to use compared to Gnome 3. But KDE4 also seems slow at times.

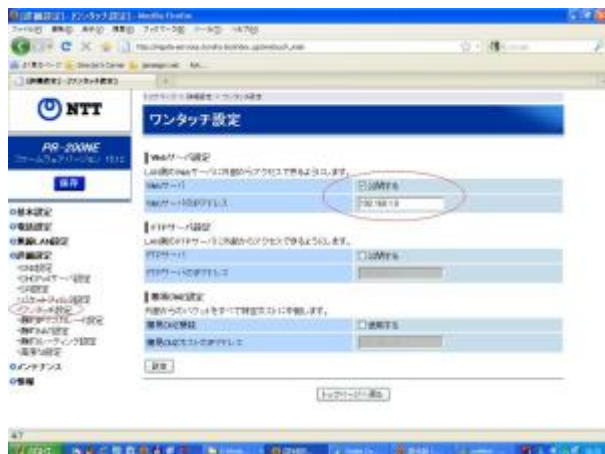
I tried out XFCE which is similar to Gnome, but it seemed to lack certain features.

I also tried LXDE. It's fast, has a Gnome 2 look (but still no Gnome 2 applets) and the default File Manager PCManFM seems to be better than Nautilus in some ways. It has configuration tweaks that Nautilus doesn't have, and it sorts my Desktop Icons automatically every time I erase a file from my Desktop. Way to go LXDE developers! However it doesn't seem to have a Favorites section for me to add frequently used software.

I'm back again to KDE4. Though its startup is slower than LXDE or XFCE, it seems to be the most configurable and easiest to use Desktop environment available now for Linux.

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## **[Adventure Setting Up a Home Web Server](#)**



Following instructions from a couple web articles, I learned to set up my own home web server!

## Moved from Fedora 14 to Linux Mint Debian



The other day I discovered that [Linux Mint recently came out with a Debian edition](#) with features that are still lacking in Ubuntu. One of the main features that caught my interest is the ability to install Linux Mint Debian on a PC with **multiple hard disk drives**. It has been my practice for a few years now to have the /home partition on a second hard disk, and to use the first hard disk for the OS on a 40 gigabyte first partition and the second partition as a backup of the /home directory on the second drive. Ubuntu's installer still does not recognize more than one hard disk during installation.

Other features of Linux Mint Debian that interested me are said to be:

- Better sound support (addressing conflicts between Pulse Audio and Flash) – This is something Fedora still has a problem with. Sometimes the microphone for Skype works, and sometimes it doesn't.

- Performance boost using cgroup, the notorious 4 lines of code better than 200 in user-space.
- The fact it is a “rolling distribution”, meaning there will be no major releases every 6 months, just one constant upgrade over time. This means I won’t have to do a clean re-install twice a year as I did with Fedora..

So far so good! The installation procedure is different than Fedora, but pretty straightforward and easy to follow. The PC didn’t boot after installation, but changing the BIOS settings of the primary boot drive fixed the problem.

I am now working in Debian for the very first time thanks to Linux Mint!

The good thing I’ve seen so far:

- All multimedia codecs seem to be already installed. MP3 and WMF files played with no further tweaks. I have to add a third party repository in Fedora to make most multimedia play.
- Skype was installable from the package manager.
- Flashplayer is part of the default installation. Youtube videos played at full screen even without having to install the device driver of my Nvidia card.
- Nvidia drivers were installable from the package manager without further tweaks. Fedora needs the RPM fusion repository for this.
- Fedora 14 used to hang during a certain point in booting. This happened after upgrading my CPU to a newer one. Pressing the Esc key would continue the process. I don’t have to do this now.
- Performance does seem to be better. Openoffice writer and Gimp load faster.

I read so far one negative user experience of an upgrade breaking Linux Mint Debian. He couldn’t fix it. Perhaps I’ll have a better experience.

I’ve been using Fedora since Fedora Core 3. So far Fedora has been the only Linux distro that has worked consistently well for me. Ubuntu live CDs have come in handy to fix certain Windows problems, but I never could quite get everything to my liking using a Ubuntu installation on my own PC. Fedora has had it’s own quirks from time to time, but I learned either how to fix them or they ironed out over time. Everything I need to do on a PC, Fedora and its friends have provided both the software and the know how. Will Linux Mint Debian be better overall for me? Will I eventually get sick of it and go back to Fedora? Will Linux Mint Debian eventually break so bad that I won’t be able to fix it? In a few weeks I’ll know for sure!

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## Another look at Ubuntu 10.4

I upgraded to Fedora 13 beta from the middle of April. Except for a couple of issues that I considered to be yet bugs in the beta version, I consider Fedora 13 to be the best Fedora Linux yet. Nevertheless, I thought to give Ubuntu 10.4 another chance before Fedora 13 goes gold on May 18. I realized later that Ubuntu 10.4 was still in beta testing when [I wrote about it on March 18.](#)

The first thing I noticed was the default background color of the latest Ubuntu had changed from that ugly brown to a pretty purple. The installation instructions were clear and straightforward.

I would have reformatted the root and boot partitions to do a clean install with Ubuntu 10.4, but the **partitioner only listed my first hard drive and not the second** where I keep my /home partition! There didn't seem to be any way to list it in order to tell Ubuntu I want to assign the second physical drive as /home. Fedora always gives a list of available drives during the installation process. Why wouldn't Ubuntu also do the same? Am I missing something? I googled for an answer but found none.

Conclusion: Cutting edge Fedora remains the best Linux distribution for me. I don't want my user data on the same physical hard drive as the operating system. Using two drives speeds up the system. The first drive is also used as a backup for the /home partition on the second drive.

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## A look at Ubuntu 10.4



Fedora Firewall GUI. The services checked in this picture do not represent my personal configuration.

I downloaded the latest version of Ubuntu Linux, version 10.4, and installed it as a [virtual machine](#) with [VMWare](#) on my [Fedora 12](#) pc. I also ran it as a live CD from boot. I'm still not convinced that Ubuntu is better than Fedora for me. Ubuntu is missing two GUIs (software with a graphic user interface) I use all the time in Fedora. There is

- no firewall GUI
- no services GUI

The basic configuration screen of the Fedora firewall GUI is clear to understand and easy to use to open the IP ports the user needs to use, and to block the ones not needed. This makes for better security, and it makes it easier to set up other features such as networking with the other PCs on the property.

The services GUI makes it easy to turn off services I don't really need which conserves resources. I remember that previous versions of Ubuntu had a services GUI, but it wasn't as comprehensive as Fedora's.

There are firewall GUIs for Ubuntu you can download and install, like Firestarter, but none are as easy to use as the Fedora firewall GUI. Firestarter requires a basic knowledge of TCP/IP protocols and ports, but the Fedora firewall GUI does not.

I really think that Fedora is not only a more mature Linux distro than Ubuntu, but it's also *easier* to tweak to do what one needs to do.

Another problem with Ubuntu 10.4 is I couldn't install Flashplayer on my 64 bit system. I had no problem with this in Fedora.

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## Using Gnome Shell



Screenshot of Gnome 2.8 desktop

I installed a beta version of the new [Gnome Shell desktop environment](#) on my Fedora Linux PC, and it seems to be very cool indeed! And it's free, not only free in the meaning of "freedom" but even free as in "free lunch."

[Gnome](#) is the standard desktop graphical environment for many [Linux distributions](#), including [Fedora](#), the Linux distribution I've been using on my PC since February 2005. Another popular Linux desktop environment is [KDE](#). Some people like it better than Gnome, because it looks a bit more like Windows®, but I found KDE buggy and unstable, at least it was 5 years ago, and stuck with Gnome. There are even more desktop environments besides these two.

The first screenshot shows my normal Gnome desktop using a top bar to show open applications, and a bottom toolbar showing the standard Gnome toolbar. The wallpaper contains a not so subliminal message.

By default the Gnome toolbars are on the opposite sides, but like to change them because it's more what I was used to when I worked in Windows®. Click any of the pictures to see an enlargement.

This screenshot is of the Gnome Shell after first running it. Notice the Gnome applets are now missing with the bottom toolbar gone. Maybe later I'll figure out how to add them again. Or possibly that feature is still not available in this beta version of Gnome Shell.



Gnome Shell after startup

Here's how it looks like after clicking on "Activities" in the top left corner!!



Gnome Shell after clicking on  
Activities

All open applications are in the right side of the screen. Just clicking on one of the icons show the application to a full screen! The area on the left shows all the folders I have for easily finding files.

When I click on the time display on the top bar, a calendar drops down and stays down until I click on the time display a second time. Cool! Click on the graphic below to see it more clearly.



Gnome Shell with dropdown calendar

Eat your hearts out, Windows® lovers!

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## [Upgrade to Fedora 12 beta](#)



**November 2:** [Fedora Linux](#) version 12 is due to come out on November 18, but I couldn't wait to try it out and installed the yet beta version.

Improvements from Fedora 11 that I've noticed:

- The default video driver recognized my dual monitor setup and automatically gave me the correct screen resolution and spanning monitors.
- Gnome seems to run faster. Terminal now comes up instantaneously.
- Many of the applications appear to load faster.
- Pulse audio now works as it should without quirks. In Fedora 10-11 I could not use other audio applications when Firefox was accessing a flash media file.
- Mplayer plays my MP3 files without the irksome shuddering sound it used to have during the first couple seconds when playing the file. This was a problem in Fedora 10 and 11 but now seems fixed.
- Bluefish HTML editor doesn't crash anymore when I do a spell check as it used to do in Fedora 10 and 11
- The new version of [Dansguardian](#) Internet content filter now runs. I couldn't get the latest version to work in Fedora 11. Dansguardian has improved with options to weed out unwanted pop-ups and advertisements. Using the Fedora Linux – Firefox – Dansguardian combination gives me the safest browsing imaginable! Eat your heart out, Windows 7!

The downsides of upgrading to Fedora 12 beta:

- In the beginning Firefox crashed a couple of times. It seems to be stable now after a week.
- I can't yet install the Nvidia video driver. But this only means I can't run applications that take a lot of video power such as Google Earth. Video files play perfectly fine.
- Wine doesn't run anymore. I have to wait for a Wine upgrade to fix a conflict with Pulse audio.

All of the above are fixed now after Fedora 12 came out with the final



release, and also thanks to the good advice on [Fedora Forum](#). I found a fix for Wine by installing the 64 bit version with the command:

```
yum install wine.i686 -y
```