GUI-based DVD Writer

Recipes for Roasting

There is no need to use cryptic command line entries to create data DVDs on Linux. GUI-based front-ends allow to create data DVDs quickly and easily. You can even use re-writable media. Just a simple click and burn.

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The DVD is still a fairly new medium in contrast to the CD. Consequently, there are only a handful of programs that support DVD writing on Linux. In fact, if you are looking for a mature tool that facilitates DVD creation, you have a choice of only two: *k3b* and *xcdroast*.

The former is a recent addition to the KDE desktop and included with many new distributions. In contrast, you can optionally install *xcdroast* on SuSE Linux 9.0, for example.

Setting Up a DVD Writer with K3B

Setting up a DVD writer for *k3b* is fairly straightforward. The program will typically recognize your DVD drives and recorders automatically, just like it recognizes traditional CD writers.

You can discover the characteristics of your DVD burning device, according to *k3b*, under *Devices* in your *k3b* settings. The program will tell you what media and formats it supports, and also show your drive'S firmware revision (see Figure 1).

However, *k3b* only quotes maximum read and write speeds for CD burning; these values are missing for DVD writers so far.

Setting up K3B

The *k3b* options contain a few additional settings which are interesting for DVD burning operations – more specifically, these are the options below *Burning* (see Figure 2).

You can use the *Advanced* tab to define more advanced settings. You should however, bear in mind that these options are not tried and trusted, and may not perform as expected, so proceed with caution.

The *Overburn* option only applies to CD writing. The DVD specification states that DVDs cannot be overburnt.

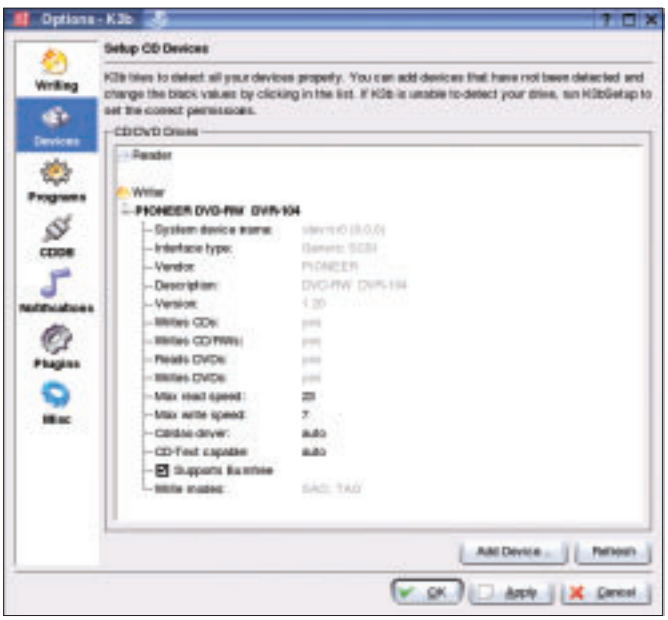

Figure 1: K3B device characteristics

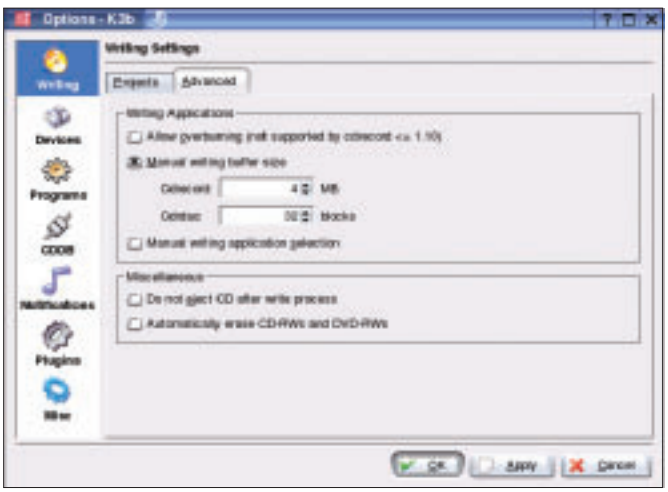

Figure 2: K3B burning options

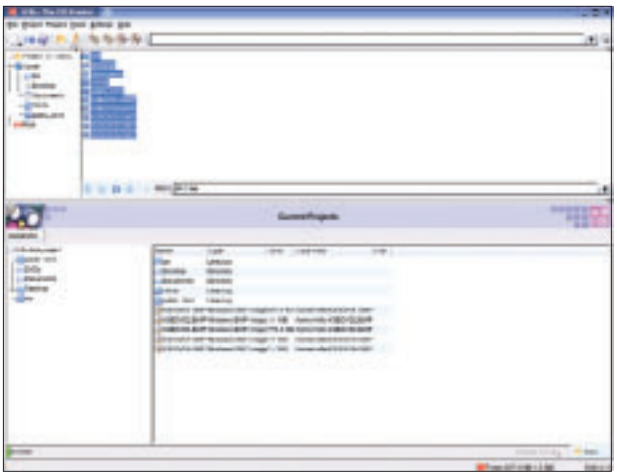

Figure 3: Use drag & drop to add data to your DVD project

Select the options you require in this tab. The last option is useful for re-writeable DVD media. If you check the *Automatically erase CD-RWs DVD-RWs* checkbox, *k3b* will take care of this step without your help.

K3B Hands On

In practical applications, *k3b* is useful both for writing DVD media, and for creating data DVDs. The steps are more or less identical, thanks to the clever design; simply select the *Create Data DVD project* option below *File / New Project*.

You can then browse the directory structure to select the files you want to place on the DVD medium; simply drag & drop them into the bottom panel (see Figure 3). Also, *k3b* does not really mind whether you use DVD + R or DVD-R media.

After selecting your files, click on the *Burn* button. A progress indicator at the bottom of the project dialog box shows you how the current operation is coming along. The colored bar is set up for a maximum of 4.7 GB when you select a DVD project.

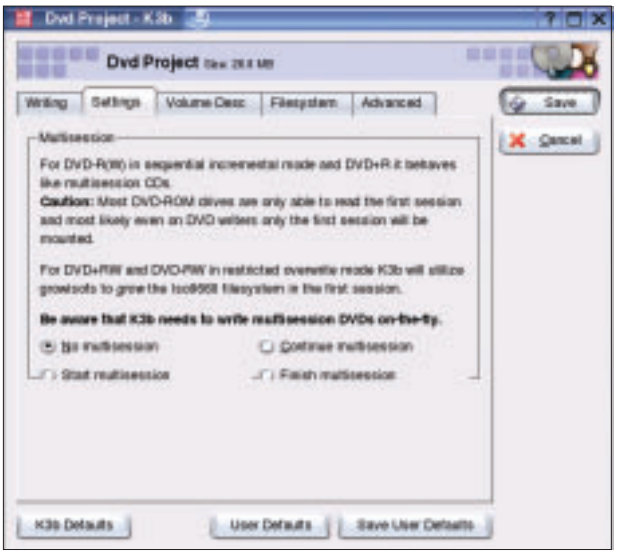

Figure 4: Not all DVD drives support multiple sessions, as this format is not sanctioned by the official DVD specifications

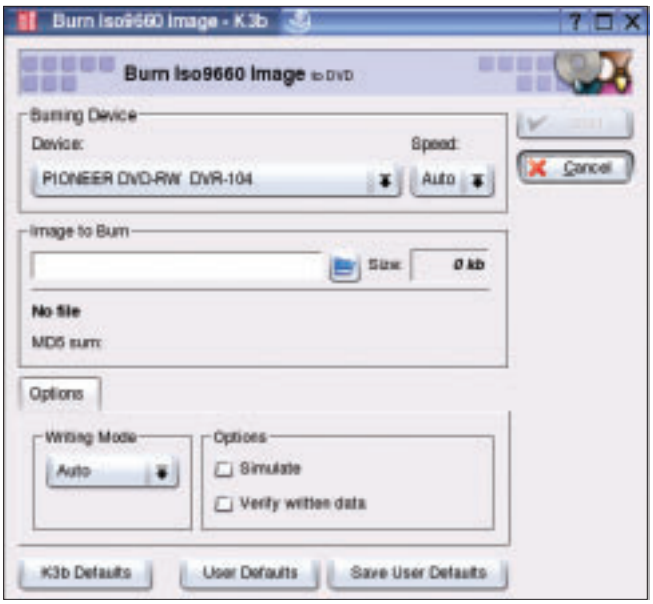

Figure 5: Burning DVD image files

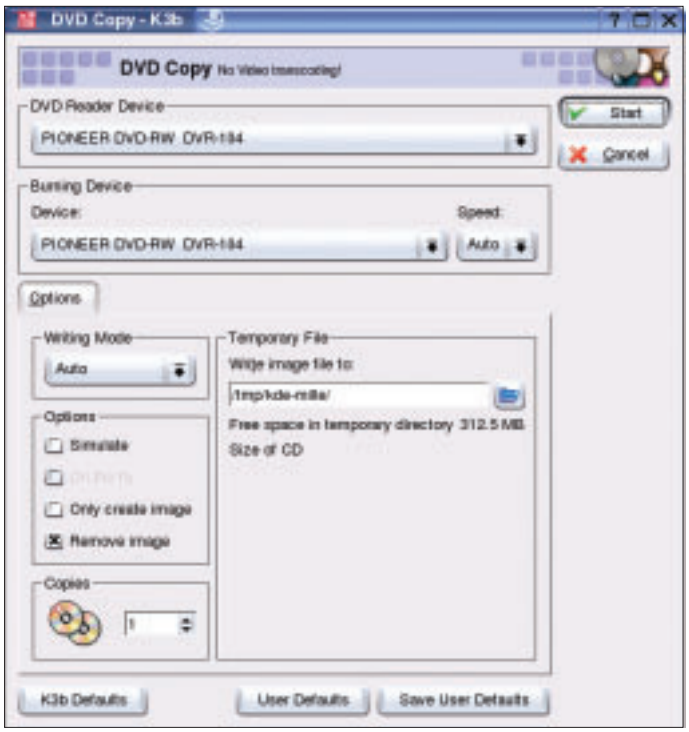

Figure 6: k3b cannot copy media with a capacity of more than 4.7 GB, and CSS encoded video DVDs

Project Settings

The software provides highly configurable settings for DVD projects – as it does for any data CD project. The feature for incremental writes is particularly interesting, as it provides a simple means of creating backups of your system without wasting too many DVD discs (see Figure 4).

The options are available in the *Settings* tab, where you can select to start, close, or continue a multi-session operation.

Note that not many drives actually support multi-session operations. If your device does not support them, you will find that only the first session on the medium will be useable later.

Burning DVD Images

k3b also allows you to burn any DVD image files you have created previously onto DVDs. To do so, select *Tools/Burn DVD Image*, search, and choose the ISO image to burn, in the dialog box that then appears on screen (see Figure 5).

When you choose an image, K3B will automatically recognize whether it is a supported DVD ISO image, or not. You can use the pull-down menus to define the burning speed and mode manually.

Copying DVDs

k3b also supports direct copying of DVD media. To create a copy, select *Copy DVD* in the project menu to open a dialog box where you can specify the settings for the copying procedure.

Ensure that there is enough free space available in your temporary directory. Then use the pull-down menus at the top of the window to select your source and target drives.

In principle, *k3b* should have no trouble creating on-the-fly copies of DVD media. However, this only applies to 1:1 copies that keep to the 4.7 GB maximum size limit.

The program cannot copy larger DVDs. And this is an important point to note when creating backups of video DVDs, as *k3b* is not capable of re-encoding video data in a video DVD compatible format (see Figure 6).

Formatting Re-Writeable DVD media

If you use re-writeable DVDs, you will need to format the used media before use. *k3b*'s graphical interface facilitates this (see Figure 7).

The *Tools* menu contains a *Format DVD* item. The program supports formatting of DVD-RW and DVD+RW media, but it will not erase DVD-RAMs.

Two format procedures are available when formatting re-

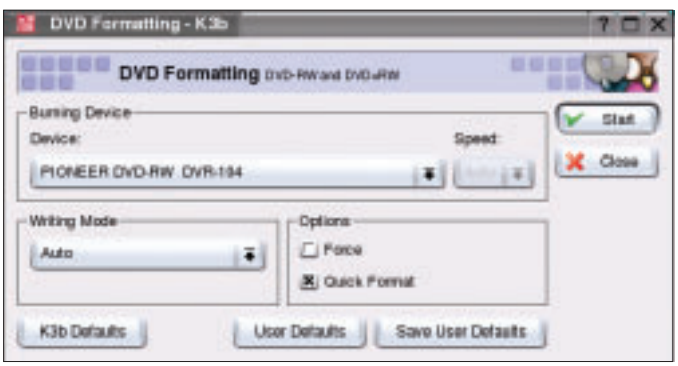

Figure 7: The GUI-based front-end provides formatting functions for re-writeable DVD+RW and DVD-RW media

Figure 8: X-CD-Roast automatically recognizes your optical drives

Figure 9: Basic X-CD-Roast Configuration

Figure 10: Xcdroast drive configuration

writeable DVDs: by default, *k3b* will perform a normal for- mat. Quick format is only used if you check that checkbox.

X-CD-Roast – The Challenger

X-CD-Roast is an interesting alternative to *k3b*. The software was the standard tool for burning CDs for a long time. The current beta version of the program can also write DVD media.

In contrast to *k3b*, the program uses a closed source variant of *cdrecord* – *cdrecord-proDVD* – as its back-end. The back-end must be installed manually.

Launch the *xcdroast* program as *root* first, to define a few basic settings, and also specify which users will be permitted to access the program to burn their own DVDs.

When first launched, *xcdroast* automatically detects any CD and DVD drives and recorders in your machine.

Configuring X-CD-Roast

After completing the scan, *xcdroast* opens up the configuration menu and shows you the drives it has recognized (see Figure 9). You can manually add any drives the software has missed. DVD recorders are automatically assigned a yellow icon to represent the burning process, and *xcdroast* displays a blue DVD icon for normal DVD drives. The program also displays the firmware versions for all your drives. You can use the tabs at the top of the dialog box to configure more options.

Configuring Drives

Detailed configuration of your DVD drives and recorders is performed in the *CD Settings* tab. In addition to setting the read and write speeds, you can manually specify a drive buffer and the default write mode (see Figure 10).

The read and write characteristics defined here apply only to traditional data and audio CDs, however.

The *HD Settings* tab is used to define a directory for temporary *xcdroast* storage. It is important that you have enough free space available at this location.

After configuring these important options, first save your changes, and then log on as a normal user, to launch the tool with the settings you specified.

Hands On

The easiest way to create a DVD using *xcdroast* is to select copying mode. To do so, click on *Read CD/DVD* and select the source drive. In *Image Directory,* type the name of the directory where you will be storing the image this step creates.

You can then click on the *Write CD/DVD* button to burn the image onto a medium. If you want to create a data DVD manually from content on your own hard disk, select the directories to be backed up in the *Create CD* | *Master Tracks* menu.

The advantage of X-CD-Roast in comparison to *k3b* is precisely this function, as it is ideal for creating backups. Later on, you can of course copy data to the directories you selected previously (see Figure 11).

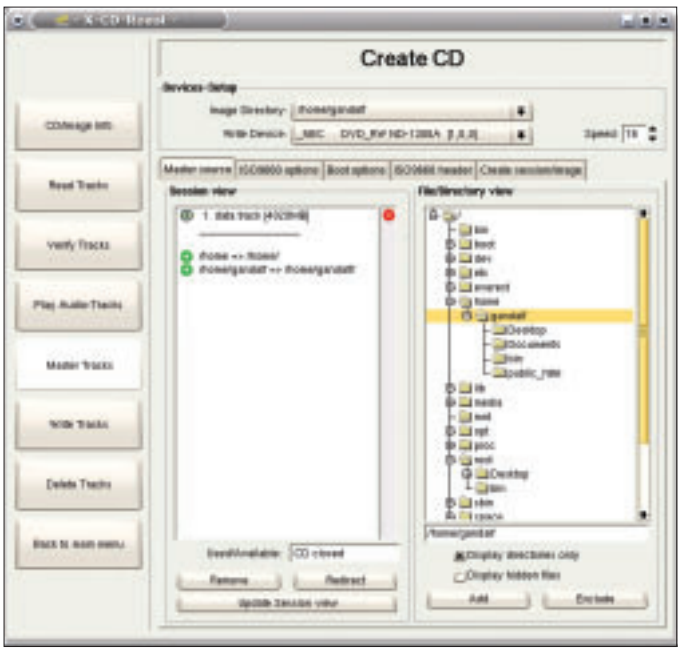

Figure 11: X-CD-Roast is particularly good at creating DVD backups

Conclusion

k3b and *xcdroast* make it easy to create data DVDs on Linux, providing GUI-based convenience.

k3b seems to be perfectly pre-destined for operations which involve re-writeable media, whereas X-CD-Roast is more useful for creating backups of your own computer. ■