

# OT ? Computing nirvana... new HP hdx laptop, F8 and dolphin. :)

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Sorry if this is off topic, but I thought that I would share my recent computing happiness with the Linux community. I suspect that some people might find it inspiring and/or informative.

My laptop died a while back so I bought a new HP hdx9494 on the weekend. For those not familiar with the HP hdx line, its a high end desktop replacement machine with a 20.1" LCD, 2 hard drive bays, an Intel Core 2 Duo T8100 processor (can be upgraded to an X9000...), 4GB RAM, a Blu Ray/ Dual layer DVD drive, a full sized keyboard, a fingerprint reader, a TV tuner with remote control, a great sound system, complete with a subwoofer and a host of other goodies.

If you guessed that the hdx is heavy, you are right. 16 pounds or so. A lot of people want a small light laptop. I want a desktop replacement and I want it to have a large, bright display. It would be nice if the hdx was 8 pounds instead of 16, but given that I don't have to carry a 20 inch widescreen with my laptop anymore, I am pretty happy. My last laptop was an HP zd7000 with a 17" Ultra Brightview monitor. While many people thought that machine was great due to its large, bright display, the hdx9494 blows it away in just about every dimension. No comparison.

This hdx line also has an eSATA port to connect to an external SATA and run it at full SATA speeds, in sharp contrast to connecting an external drive via USB. I've found the hdx battery life to be surprisingly good... more than 2 hours while web browsing via a WiFi connection. That might sound bad to someone used to 5 hours from their palmtop, but its pretty good for a fast desktop replacement with a big bright display.

FWIW, I paid \$1600 for my hdx. HP seems to have discontinued these machines. I don't think there are many left to buy.

The hdx9494 comes with a single 5400 RPM 320GB SATA drive. I wanted more storage space and a faster hard drive for the OS, so I added a 7200 RPM Seagate 160 GB hard drive as the primary drive. 480 GB of storage in a laptop ! I'm in heaven. I plan to use a dedicated external SATA drive for backup purposes... I'd hate to lose 400 GB of data by dropping my laptop or having it stolen.

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As we all know, hardware is only half the computing equation. The hdx comes equipped with a 64 bit version of Vista. I powered it up when I got home and spent the next 30 minutes watching it go through its startup process. Then I played with it for about an hour. It runs pretty fast on the hdx, but there was no way that I was going to keep it installed. I had XP installed (dual boot) on my last laptop. I ended up using it about twice a year... not enough to warrant the precious hard drive space it took up. If I come to the conclusion that I need Windows on my hdx, I'll install XP on it. Nevertheless, I made the Vista recovery disks before I uninstalled it. It took about 2 hours to make 3 single sided DVDs. Sad.

With that complete, I installed the 32 bit version of F8 from the DVD. The first thing I noticed is that the wireless card (Intel(R) PRO/Wireless 4965AGN with Bluetooth) worked automatically during the first boot up ! This is the first time that I have installed Linux on a computer (since RH8 days) that a wireless card worked without either building ndiswrapper or setting up the livna repository and downloading a kernel module. With my wireless connection working, I ran yum update. About 480 packages got upgraded.

I then enabled the livna repository and installed the nvidia kernel module and dependencies and wala, I had 1680x1050 on my desktop, all without editing the xorg.config file. That too was a first for me. Until now I always had to muck around with xorg.config to get the video to work properly. Linux is progressing ! Many thanks to those in developer land that made this a reality.

With the wireless card and nvidia video working, I then went about copying my data from my old laptop hard drive to the hdx by installing it in a USB IDE hard drive enclosure.

What a joy it is to be running F8 again. I've been running F9 since early July and I have to say that my desktop and computer in general was terribly disorganized due to my dislike of using the KDE 4.x desktop. I'm not saying this as a knock against the developers. In fact, I think that KDE4 is going to be much nicer than KDE 3 will ever be... someday. For now, I am much more happy with KDE 3.

But I did miss Dolphin. So I installed it on F8. (# yum install d3lphin)  
Dolphin beats Konqueror hands down for me.

So here I sit typing away on this gorgeous laptop, running Fedora 8. They make a great combination. Everything is very fast and comfortable. I've got a fast and powerful machine with a versatile, stable, elegant operating system. This is the way computing is supposed to be. I haven't been this happy since I moved from a Mac Plus (8 inch B&W display, slow Motorola 32000 processor, 40MB hard drive) to a Sun Workstation back in the 80s !

All is not perfect, however. Not all the hardware works with F8, not that I've spent much time setting things up. I haven't looked at the webcam, remote control or finger print reader yet. Nor the flash card reader, although the kernel seems to recognize it. Maybe it too works out of the

box ?

The soundcard doesn't work properly. Sound does work properly from headphone jack #2, although it isn't very loud. Sound doesn't work from jack #1, nor does it work from the laptop speakers. I think I saw a post and a bug report on this same issue, so I'll give it some time. I was surprised to find that the funky mute/volume and other audio control buttons built into the laptop work right out of the box. I find it nice to touch the mute button on the laptop when the phone rings to silence Amarok rather than fumbling around with the mouse.

The touchpad works much better than touchpads have in the past. But for some reason it continues to work even when one shuts it off with the switch. I haven't looked into this issue yet.

And the eSATA port isn't working yet. Luckily my external hard drive supports both USB and eSATA so I got by yesterday with using the USB port instead.

All in all, I am happy to be back in F8 land and very happy with my HP hdx. Kudos to the Fedora/Linux/OS developers for giving me a great computing environment.

Disclaimer: I have no affiliation with HP whatsoever.

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