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Q&A with Ubuntu Forums admin Mike Basinger

ANSWERBUNTU

By the time you read this article, Ubuntu 12.04 will have been out for a couple of months. Ubuntu 12.04 is a long-term support (LTS) release and has many new features. Chief among these is the completed version of the Unity desktop for the Gnome environment.

Unity has been under continuous active development during the last two years and has earned a love/hate relationship within the Ubuntu and wider Linux community. In this issue, my column will be focused on Unity and common questions associated with it.

I Want My Classic Gnome!



Why has the Unity desktop been forced on me? I want just to continue using the Gnome 2.x desktop.

Jeff J. in Salt Lake City, UT



Unity has been the default desktop since Ubuntu 11.04, but unlike Windows and OS X, you can easily install a different desktop interface in Ubuntu. If you want to continue using the Gnome 2.x interface, just install the `gnome-panel` package with the command:

```
sudo apt-get install gnome-panel
```

Log out or reboot your computer, then select Gnome Classic from the Unity Greeter and log in (Figure 1).

You can also install Gnome Shell, if you prefer that desktop. As always, be careful using personal package archives (PPAs) because they are not as thoroughly checked for bug and security issues as software in the official Ubuntu repository.

```
sudo add-apt-repository ppa:gnome3-team/gnome3
sudo apt-get update
sudo apt-get install gnome-shell
gnome-tweak-tool
```

Another choice is Cinnamon:

```
sudo add-apt-repository ppa:gwendal-lebihan-dev
cinnamon-stable
sudo apt-get update
sudo apt-get install cinnamon
```

Cinnamon is a Gnome 3 fork that allows you to have a menu panel at the bottom. This is useful for people who want to use Ubuntu with a classic bottom menu (Figure 2).

You can also install one of the other Ubuntu flavors offered by the community from CD or via package

For Kubuntu, you can do:

```
sudo apt-get install kubuntu-desktop
```

For Xubuntu:

```
sudo apt-get install xubuntu-desktop
```

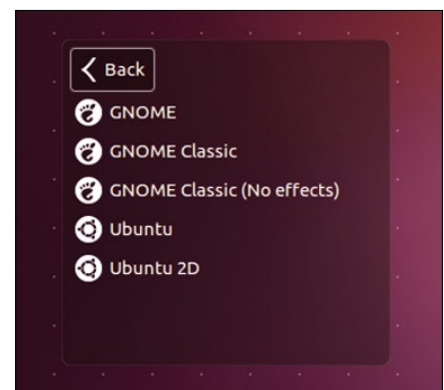


Figure 1: You can select Gnome Classic from the Unity Greeter.

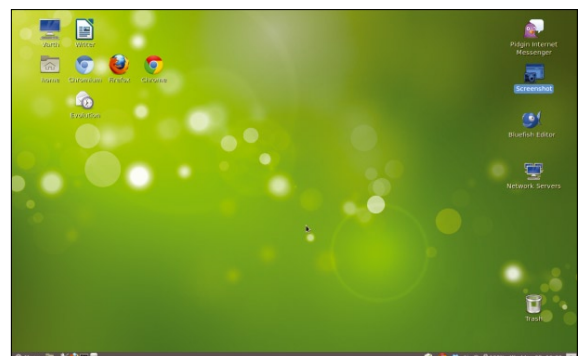


Figure 2: Cinnamon features a classic bottom menu.

For Ubuntu:

```
sudo apt-get install lxde
```

Note that you can install Ubuntu from CD/USB for the full Ubuntu experience [1].

Now that I have answered your question, I want to ask a favor. Give Unity another chance. Many of the complaints with Unity have been addressed in Ubuntu 12.04, and Unity is far more stable than it has been in previous releases. You might be surprised how much it has improved and how well it works.

Mastering Unity Shortcuts



I have been using Unity for a few weeks, and I'm enjoying it, but I'm mousing everywhere. I know Unity is supposed to be keyboard-centric, but I cannot find a list of common keyboard shortcuts. Can you help me before I wear out my mouse?

Thanks, Steve from West Yellowstone



Unity is a very keyboard-centric desktop, and once you learn these shortcuts, you should notice an increase in your work flow.

The first shortcut you should learn is the Super key. If you press and hold the Super key (the Windows key on most PCs and the Command key on Apple keyboard), this will bring up a list of the most common keyboard shortcuts (Figure 3).

By hitting Super + 1, you will launch the Dash, and pressing Super + 2 through 9 will launch the second through ninth programs listed on your



Figure 3: Unity keyboard shortcuts.

launch, as numbered top to bottom. Ctrl + Alt + T will launch a terminal window, which is a necessary tool for an Ubuntu user. Remember, if you are using an Apple keyboard, you need to hit the fn (function) key with the Option key to get the Alt key. An Ubuntu community member has created a spreadsheet with all known Ubuntu keyboard shortcuts that was uploaded to Ubuntu One at the time of this writing [2].

My Unity Needs a New Paint Job



I like Unity, but I'm not thrilled with look of it. I could not find any way

to change my

icons or my theme. Is it possible to change how Unity looks, or am I stuck with the default?



One of the early complaints with Unity was how little its appearance could be easily customized. Many simple changes like changing the font or icons had to be done through complex utilities like *dconf-editor*.

In 12.04, however, some options have been added to the Appearance control panel, such as resizing the launcher (Figure 4). To really change how Unity looks, you need to install a third-party

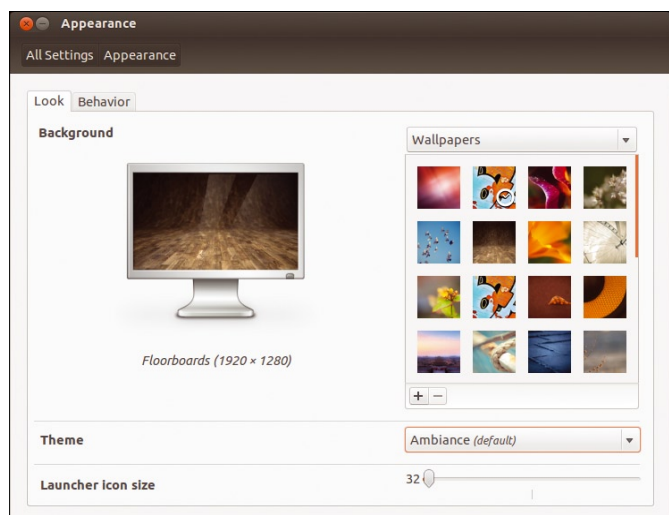


Figure 4: Resizing the launcher in Unity.

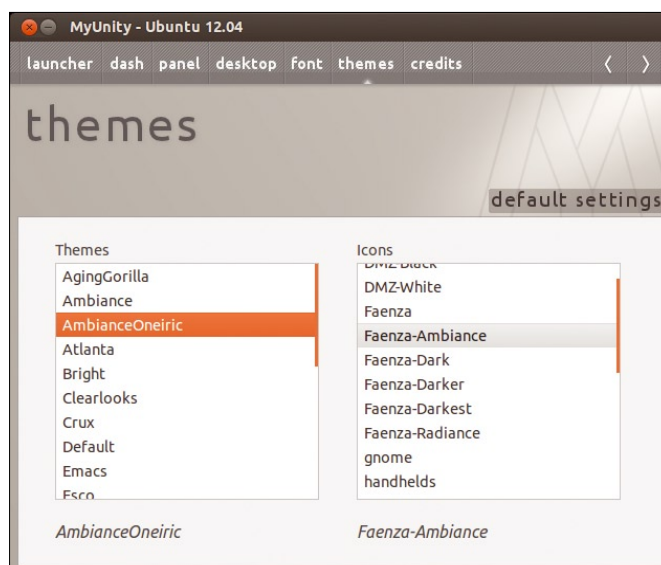


Figure 5: MyUnity lets you configure themes and other settings.

program, such as MyUnity or Ubuntu Tweak.

MyUnity is an unofficial Unity configurator that is included in the Ubuntu universe repository. It allows easy configuration of your theme, icons, fonts, transparency, and other settings. It also has a default settings button to change

easily to baseline settings if needed (Figure 5). To install MyUnity, use the command:

```
sudo apt-get install myunity
```

Ubuntu Tweak is a popular third-party customization tool that has a large fol-

lowing (Figure 6). It offers a wide variety of system and theme tweaks.

```
sudo add-apt-repository \n ppa:tualatrix/ppa
```

```
sudo apt-get update && \n sudo apt-get install ubuntu-tweak
```

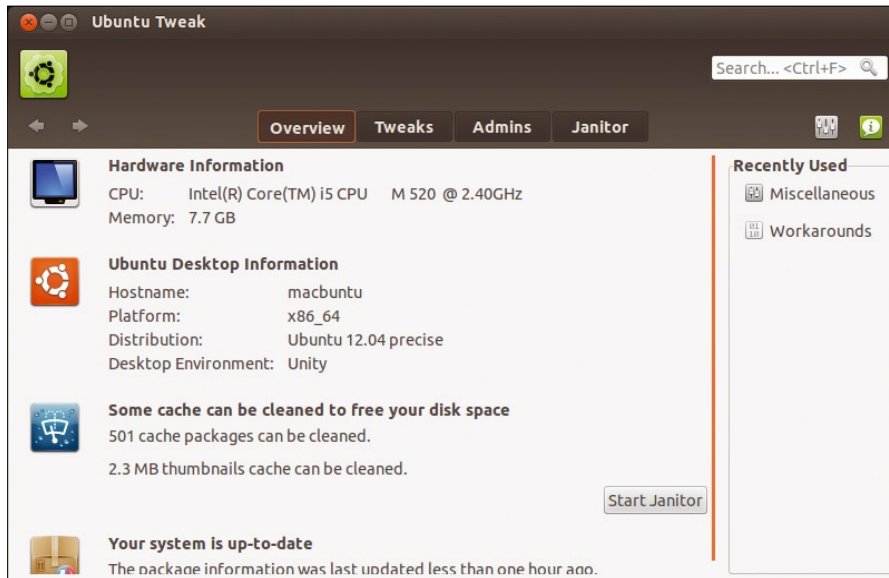


Figure 6: Ubuntu Tweak.

Ubuntu Tweak has two main problems. The first is that it is not in the official Ubuntu repository, so no guarantee for the quality of the code is made. I have found it pretty stable, however.

The second problem is that because of the sheer number of changes you can make, it is easy to change something that could render your Ubuntu install unusable, so you need to be careful when using it. ■

INFO

- [1] Lubuntu:
<https://wiki.ubuntu.com/Lubuntu>
- [2] Keyboard shortcuts:
<http://ubuntuone.com/445iraY9jMpTlQufDJ2cpl>

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