KDE turns 30 with Plasma 6.8, remote upgrades, and an X11 farewell

Marking the 30th anniversary of software developer KDE on October 14, the company released Plasma 6.8, debuted a movie, and retired Plasma's native X11 session support. The announcement from KDE dubs the new Plasma 6.8 as the "30th Anniversary Edition" and describes the update as preparing Plasma for the future. Legacy X11 applications will still function via the XWayland compatibility layer, and KDE applications will also continue supporting X11 under other desktop environments.

After 42 years in service, the X11 protocol is losing another major desktop environment. Plasma will fully adopt the Wayland system and put support for starting new X11 sessions in Plasma to bed. Users opting to stay on Plasma 6.7 will keep their existing sessions for now. The move was expected, with GNOME officially dropping X11 sessions by default in 2025.

The new Plasma 6.8 brings many improvements, including increased support for adding window decorations (like shadows and rounded corners) to third-party apps, and a more streamlined Union theming system. Other notable additions include Nvidia triple buffering being enabled by default, Kup backup integration (KDE's backup utility—now integrated into Plasma), and kscreenctl, a command-line utility that allows power users to adjust display configurations.

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https://arstechnica.com/gadgets/2026/10/kde-turns-30-with-plasma-6-8-remote-upgrades-and-an-x11-farewell/

Plex now helps sell movie theater tickets

Plex, which made a name for itself by letting users share movies they own, is now helping sell movie theater tickets. The company is looking to monetize its content-discovery capabilities and expand its business beyond its media server software.

Plex partnered with Fandango, which has sold movie tickets since 2000, to drive ticket sales from people searching for movies to stream. Per the announcement:

> *Starting today, Plex users in the US will see a Fandango ticketing option on title pages for movies currently playing in theaters, allowing them to click through to Fandango to find showtimes and purchase tickets. The integration also enables direct attribution through Kochava, giving studios and advertisers greater visibility into how campaigns and audience engagement translate into ticket sales.*

Fandango says it sells tickets for 31,000 movie theater screens in the US. The Plex deal allows it to leverage data from Plex's streaming service (Plex claims users of the service "make more than 100 million streaming decisions each month"), including "ratings and cross-platform viewing" to gain "insight into audience intent," the announcement said.

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https://arstechnica.com/gadgets/2026/10/plex-now-helps-sell-movie-theater-tickets/

Black Sea drone attacks enter NATO country’s territorial waters for first time

Russian drones are suspected of sinking a cargo ship and leaving chemical tankers ablaze near the Black Sea coasts of Bulgaria and Romania, respectively. The latest attacks mean that at least seven ships have been attacked in the exclusive economic zones of NATO member countries—and even within Romania’s territorial waters if Russian involvement is confirmed in the case of the chemical tankers.

Such attacks have spurred requests for NATO to redeploy counter-drone systems to provide more protection. In a social media post on October 15, NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte stated that NATO had increased “counter-drone capabilities” along the alliance’s eastern flank after meeting with the leaders of Bulgaria and Romania.

The latest attacks this week occurred within 24 hours between October 14 and October 15, when the two chemical tankers were set afire after Russian drones were detected in Romanian airspace, according to Deutsche Welle. Both ships were sitting at anchor near the mouth of the Sulina canal that connects the Black Sea to the Danube River, which has become a crucial shipping export route for Ukraine, Reuters reported.

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https://arstechnica.com/gadgets/2026/10/black-sea-drone-attacks-enter-nato-countrys-territorial-waters-for-first-time/

Skydance’s Discovery+ prices increase by up to 20 percent

Discovery+ subscription prices went up today.

Ad-free plans for new subscribers went from $10 per month to $12/month. Ad-based plans went from $6 to $7.

The new prices take effect for new subscribers immediately. Current subscribers to the streaming service, which primarily features unscripted content, like reality shows and documentaries, will receive 30 days’ notice before the new prices take effect, starting with bills issued as of November 12.

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Apple’s first smart display is the 7-inch HomeView for $299

Apple opened preorders for the HomeView smart home hub today.

The HomeView is a 7-inch smart display and speaker that aims

to be a central access point for up to six members of a family to access and control Apple’s ecosystem of devices, apps, and the Siri generative AI chatbot that’s currently in beta.

Users can speak to HomeView to control smart home devices, such as, for example, telling Siri to close the smart blinds or activate smart locks. HomeView can also show a livestream for up to nine video feeds simultaneously.

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https://arstechnica.com/apple/2026/10/apple-homeview-smart-home-hub-opens-for-preorders-at-299/

Russia was not ready for the data center war it started with Ukraine

When Russia began attacking Ukrainian data centers and telecommunication infrastructure, it apparently failed to prepare for possible retaliation. Now Russia’s digital services are facing widespread outages after Ukrainian drone strikes knocked out three of the largest data centers owned by Russian tech giant Yandex within several days.

Pro-Kremlin bloggers are warning that Russia’s centralized digital economy could collapse because the country is not prepared for the “data center war” it started, according to posts translated by the pseudonymous independent researcher ChrisO_wiki. The Russian commentators also suggested that Ukraine’s decentralized digital services could prove more

resilient than Russia’s system if the countries continue trading such blows.

Russia initially launched a drone strike campaign targeting Ukrainian data centers and mobile phone networks in late September. The attacks temporarily disrupted Internet and cell phone service for up to 100,000 households in the Ukrainian capital of Kyiv and came as part of a broader long-range strike campaign that has involved Russian missiles and jet-powered drones hitting Ukraine’s power grid infrastructure, transportation hubs, and even residential apartment building blocks.

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Google announces the Fitbit Edge, a middle ground between Pixel Watch 5 and Fitbit Air

Google is releasing its second Fitbit tracker of 2026, offering fans of the aging Charge 6 a more refined option. The new Fitbit Edge slots right in between the Pixel Watch 5 and the Fitbit Air, featuring a compact screen and more health sensors than the Air. You won’t get all the apps and features of the Pixel Watch 5, but the Edge is only about half as expensive.

The Fitbit Edge is essentially a new Charge 6, but it has more

of a Pixel Watch aesthetic. Squish Google’s smartwatch from the sides, and you’ve got the Edge. It has a pill-shaped 1.34-inch OLED touch display inside a slender aluminum frame that is rated IP68 (5 ATM) for water and dust protection. Google says the screen has 46 percent more viewable area compared to the Charge 6. It’s very close in overall size to the Fitbit Air and uses the same magnetic charging puck.

Left to right: Fitbit Air (with new metal mesh band), Fitbit Edge, and Pixel Watch 5. Credit: Google

The Edge works with Android or iPhones via the Google Health app, and it can run for about seven days on a charge. If the tracker is away from your phone, it can still follow your activity all week with support for seven days of full health data storage (or 30 days of basic data). However, the generous

weeklong battery life does not include always-on display mode. If you turn it on, battery life drops to about two days, barely longer than the Pixel Watch 5.

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https://arstechnica.com/gadgets/2026/10/google-announces-the-fitbit-edge-a-middle-ground-between-pixel-watch-5-and-fitbit-air/

Amazon has over 1 million robot workers. What’s next for human employees?

No organization in the world operates more robots than Amazon. The company already has more than 1 million robots working in warehouses around the clock to make tens of millions of same-day and one-day package deliveries happen on a daily basis—and Amazon is poised to significantly grow that robotic fleet in the coming years as it establishes new factories to churn out increasingly more capable robot workers.

Despite deploying so many robots, Amazon is also the second-largest corporate employer in the world, with more than 1.5 million full-time and part-time human workers, according to its 2025 annual report. Amazon executives say that the growing robot fleet has eased the burden on its human workforce by taking on the toughest fulfillment center tasks that carry the greatest risks of physical fatigue and injury. But labor advocacy groups and independent researchers point to evidence

suggesting that warehouse automation driven by AI is not all upside for the humans who work alongside robots.

“For the last 100 years, most of the automation that we’ve seen usually happens away from workers—you’re taking that high-risk task away from the worker, and you’re doing so in a way that is not physically proximate,” Brian Greenwood, professor of business at George Mason University, told Ars. “The rise of collaborative robots really changes that dynamic for two reasons: one is that it is physically proximate, and two, the robot has the ability to dictate the pace of work.”

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https://arstechnica.com/ai/2026/10/inside-amazons-robotic-arms-race-and-what-it-means-for-the-future-of-human-work/

Review: 4-hour Musk documentary feels like two different films

Elon Musk is a very familiar figure to Ars readers, given his massive influence (for better and worse) on the technology sector over the last 20 years. Oscar-winning director Alex Gibney’s latest biographical documentary—simply titled *Musk*—covers a lot of well-known ground and challenges the carefully crafted public image of Musk as a visionary tech titan.

Gibney’s documentary presents Musk as more of a Gilded Age confidence man, rejiggered for the 21st century: an investor

cosplaying as an inventor whose real genius is pumping stocks and dazzling investors and the public alike with visions of a high-tech utopian future. The film is bound to push all the right outrage buttons, whether one is a Musk fan or a detractor—which makes it very much a product of the peculiar social media-driven era in which we live.

Gibney has been making documentaries since the 1980s, covering such varied subjects as Jimi Hendrix, Hunter S. Thompson and gonzo journalism, WikiLeaks, Scientology, Steve Jobs, Elizabeth Holmes (the subject of another forthcoming documentary, *You Can See Everything*, featuring comedian Nathan Fielder), Boris Becker, *The Sopranos* creator David Chase, alleged Russian interference in the US 2016 presidential election, the opioid epidemic, and cyclist Lance Armstrong. He snagged his first Oscar nomination for 2005's *Enron: The Smartest Guys in the Room*, and won the Oscar for Best Documentary Feature two years later for *Taxi to the Dark Side*.

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PC shipments fall 20.1 percent in "sharpest decline" since Q1 2023

PC shipments saw a steep drop of about 20 percent in Q3 2026, analysts reported this week.

The industry saw its “sharpest decline since “Q1 2023,” Omdia said in an announcement toady. Global shipments of laptops, desktops, and workstations fell 21.2 percent year over year (YoY) to 58.1 million devices, the analyst said.

Desktop PC shipments (including desktop workstations) decreased 23.5 percent to 11.7 million units, and laptop shipments (including laptop workstations) declined 20.6 percent to 46.4 million, per Omdia.

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