

New Wave theme graphical guidelines

Hi! For those who don't know me yet, I'm François Degraeve, and I made the original mockup for New Wave.

First of all, it is clear that the most important thing to do right now is to work on the engine for the theme. However, beyond that technical part, we have to keep a very attentive eye on the graphical part, and define a real main goal and sub-goals. That is the aim of this paper.

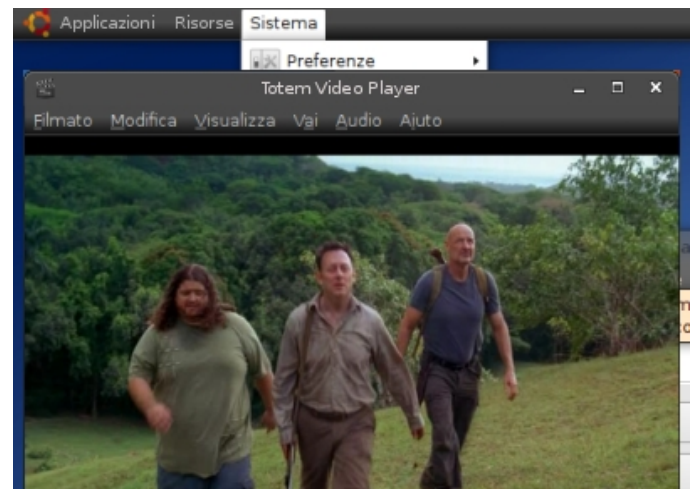
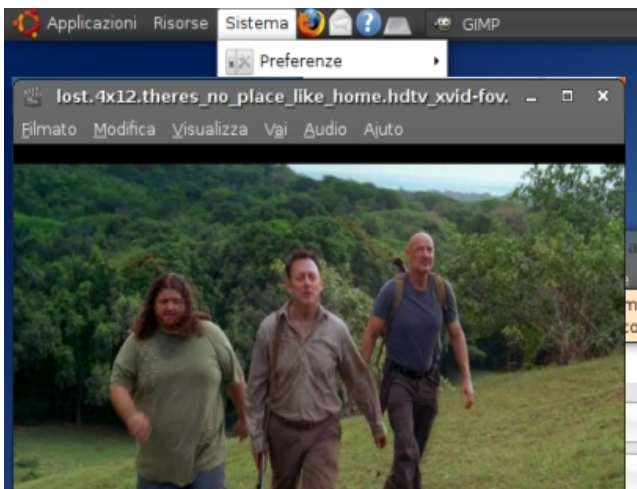
Please also keep in mind that colours used here are mainly proposition and not final decisions.

0. About the goal of New Wave

The goal of New Wave is to create a dark theme which keeps all the visual clearness of a light theme. More than that, we also want the theme to be:

- **Consistent:** each element of the User Interface must be a part of a whole; more particularly, each item having the same semantics should have the same look
- **Simple:** the simplicity has different aspects, such as the **colours** for example, each particular item (menus, bars) should use a minimum of colours and the **textures** glassy textures are sophisticated but look old, the use of gradients is more simple and more in the spirit of New Wave.
- **Eye-easy:** use of neutral colours for nearly everything except for points of interest actions, warnings can really be a plus for the comfort of use of a computer.

1. Taskbar/Windows consistency



This picture on the left is a good example of inconsistency. The taskbar here doesn't look like it belongs to the same category as the window.

Moreover, the (left part of the) taskbar is nothing but the main menubar of the system. Therefore, the menubar of each window should have exactly the same look 'n feel as the taskbar.

The picture on the right shows how we can correct this.

Indeed, in this picture, the menubar of the window the lowest half of the window bar has **exactly the same look** as the taskbar (*that's not entirely true here, since fonts colour doesn't look exactly the same but it was my purpose*).

2. Glassy look vs. Gradient look

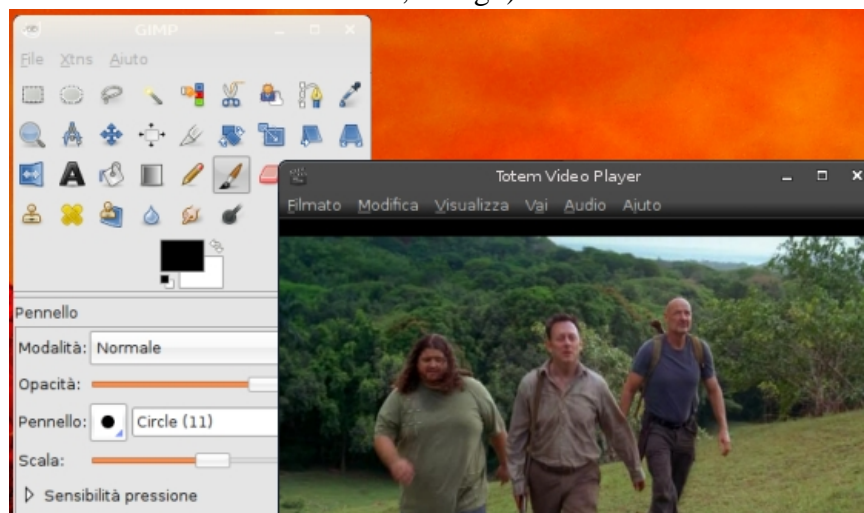
We want New Wave to look clean, but on top of that we want it to look modern. And glassy look/water effect is not modern any more (it was in the first MacOSX, released in 2001!!!).

In New Wave, we will thus use gradients rather than glassy things. For example, among the two following icons, the left one will be preferred:

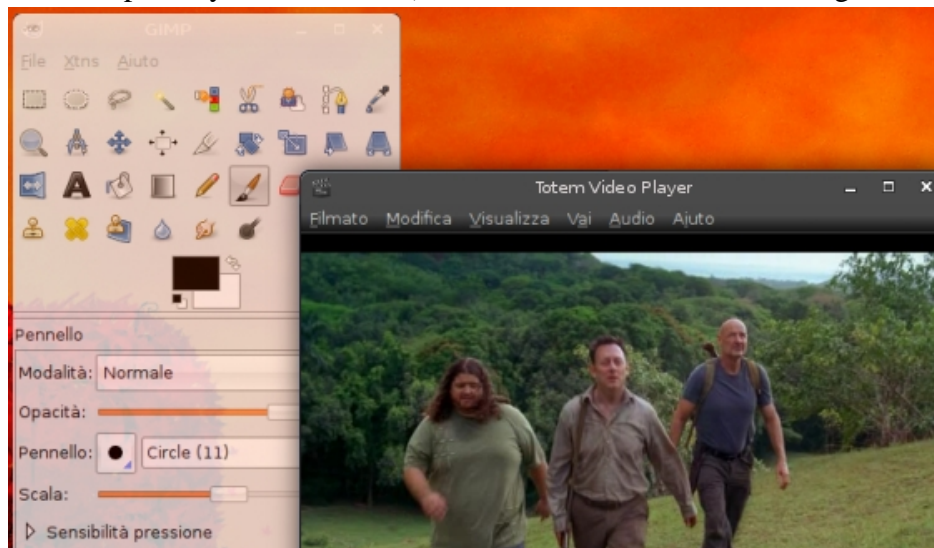


3. Active/Inactive windows recognition

Making the active windows easily recognizable from inactive ones is crucial for eye-easiness. Currently, it seems it is not possible to make different menubars for active/inactive windows, but that is definitely something we should have. Here is an example of how the windows should look like (the font on the inactive one could be darker, though):



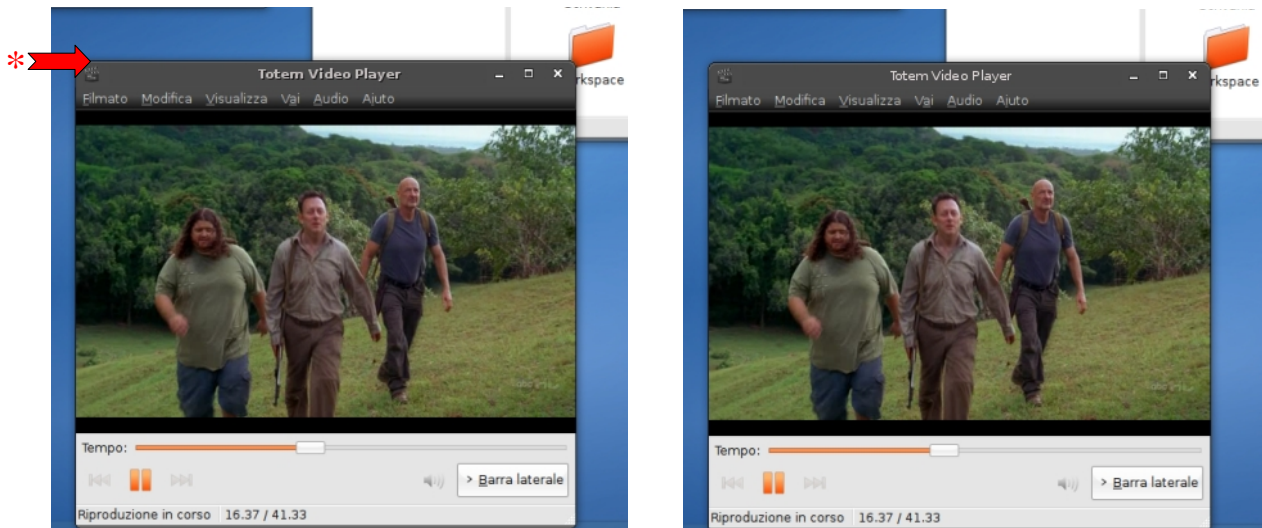
We could even get a better result using different transparencies and shadows – however, there is another problem since Compiz does not allow us to apply different shadows on active/inactive windows (but for transparency it is ok I think). There is how that ideal thing would look like:



On that last picture, the active window really looks like it is on top of everything, whereas the inactive one looks like it is stuck on the desktop.

4. Windows title bars (font: lighter rather than bolder)

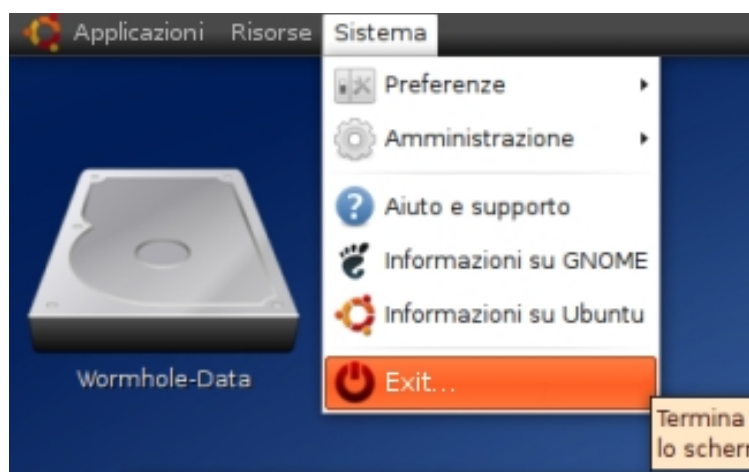
Using a bold font with a shadow for the title of the window makes things look dirty. Instead of that, the use of the regular font without shadow colored with a lighter gray allows us to keep things clean and modern, while keeping the title more important. Here is a quick comparison of the two approaches (bolder on the left, lighter on the right):



* Please note the thin lighter line on top of the window. I think that improves the visual style by giving the feeling that windows are actual objects.

5. Selected Menu Items

Here is the picture of the selected menus:

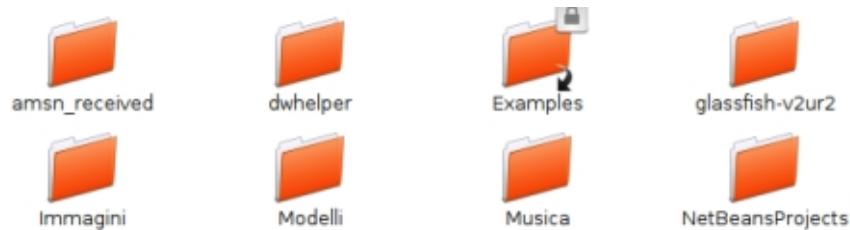


As written before, each item having the same semantics should have the same look. Therefore, selected menu items in menubars of the windows should have this same look.

I know that this inverted selected menu makes trouble with some applications such as Firefox because they hard-coded some values. We won't give up that nice effect for that reason so **if you see a problem like this PLEASE FILE A BUG to the application under concern.**

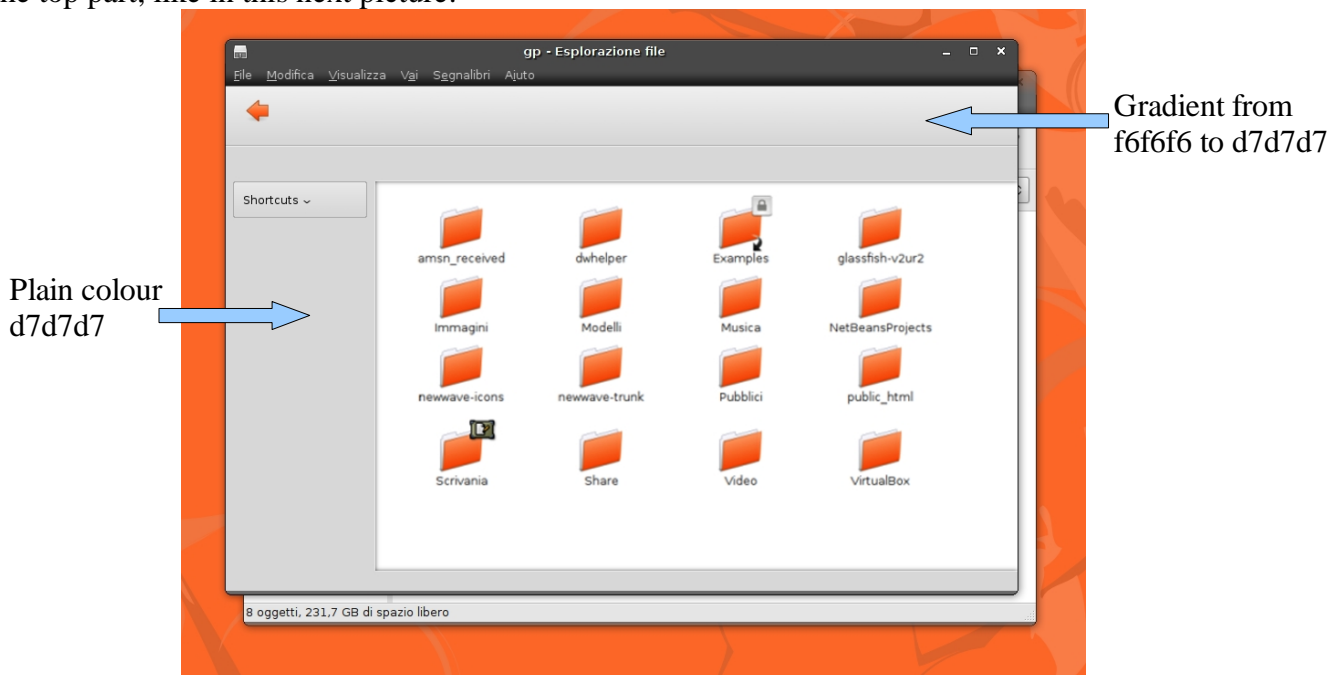
Note the white font on the orange selected item. This is easily readable, and a shiny orange (in this example, central gradient from ff783d to ff6326) highlight things really well. However, the **folder icons** and **action icons** (and maybe others) [should be adapted to match the same colours](#) (and keep a consistent palette).

Here is the preview of how folder icons would look like:



6. Nautilus look: gradients and sidebar

The current Nautilus misses a real look 'n feel . This could be corrected by applying a gradient on the top part, like in this next picture:



It seems this gradient will need to be computed at runtime, since we don't know the size of the toolbar in advance indeed, the user can decide to display the tools only with the text, only with the icons or both.

Also note the nice separation between the contain of the folder and the rest of the window (thin light line + shadow):



7. Buttons

Like the rest, buttons have a gradient texture (from f6f6f6 to d7d7d7). Example:



TODO: define the highlighted button, the pressed button, the hovered button.

8. Monochromic status icons and applications icons?

Having monochromic status icons in the taskbar is a really nice feature of New Wave, fulfilling all the requirements for the theme (simple, eye-easy and consistent with the colours of the theme).

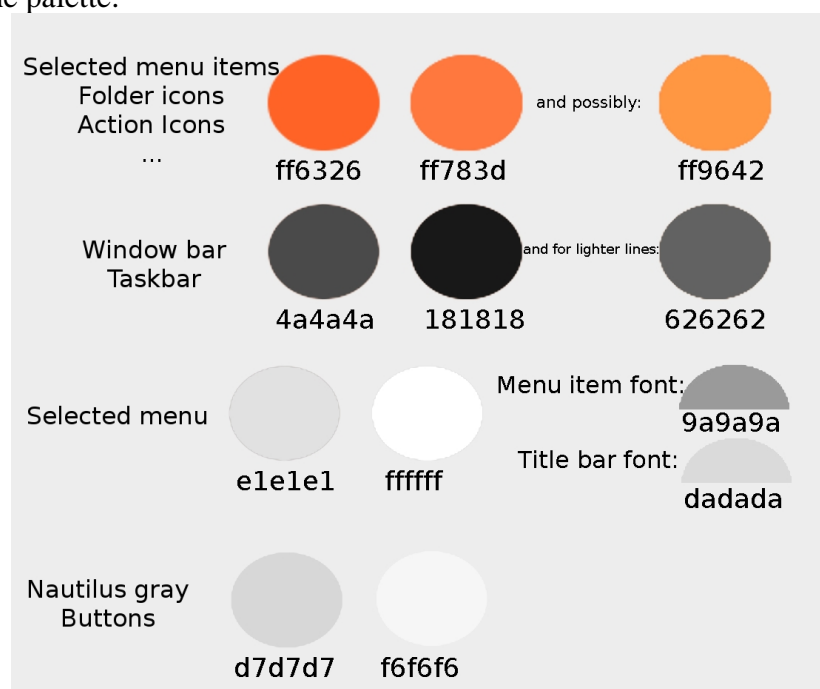
HOWEVER, one question remains: should we make flat icons for applications?

In my opinion, it doesn't seem so; we should make such icons only for **status icons** (network, sound, battery level, etc.). The core problem is: **WHAT IS CONSIDERED AS A STATUS?** Should we consider the online status of Pidgin as a system status, then worth appearing as a flat icon in the notification area?

[This is an open issue](#). Please think about which icons are worth appearing as flat icons.

9. Palette proposition

After having presented all the most important features of the theme, I think we can make a proposition for the palette:



However, even if there is a palette, it is not mandatory that each icon contains exclusively colours from this palette. Please keep in mind that the most important is the eye-easiness, and therefore an icon should be such that it allows to understand the action we are about to perform with a quick look to it. [Colours are therefore really important to give a meaning to the icon corresponding to an action](#). The palette is there only for neutral objects, which do not have a strong meaning.

10. TODO: Lifts, progress bars

Lifts and progress bars are really important for the look of the theme. We have to be really careful when choosing them. I have no proposition for the moment, but I'm working on it.

First drafts for progress bar:

