



Eclipse vs Netbeans



By [Roger Keays](#), 9 January 2007

I've been a big fan of vim pretty much since I left high school. I'll admit that it isn't the most welcoming of text editors, but after having grown accustomed to its UI and key bindings I thought I'd never have to look for another editor again. Vim is lightweight, fast, allows you to work without reaching for the mouse, has syntax highlighting for about a billion different languages and can do practically anything you can imagine if you care to check the manual.

When I started programming in Java, vim did just fine. But as the complexity of my work grew and the number of artifacts to maintain increased I found that vim let me down in two ways:

- Vim has no file manager / speedbar to quickly locate and load files on the disk.
- Vim doesn't help you build your project, and I was getting tired of maintaining ant scripts and lib directories.

I figured there couldn't be any harm in trying some of those IDEs that everybody was ranting about. I mean, when have the masses ever been wrong? It turns out that they weren't wrong, but not for the reasons I expected.

Here's the comparison table I made of the IDE's which I evaluated. Its dated July 2005, so it's not supposed to be current but I think it is still interesting nevertheless. For some stupid reason I didn't record what versions I was evaluating. I know it was Netbeans 4.1 and Eclipse 3.1 though.

| | <i>Eclipse</i> | Netbeans | JDeveloper | Java Studio Creator |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------|----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Product | | | | |
| Vendor | Eclipse Foundation | Sun | Oracle | Sun |
| Maturity | still quite young | still quite young | mature | built on netbeans |
| Stability | crashed several times | no crashes | no crashes | no crashes |
| Licensing/cost | OSS/Free | OSS/Free | ADF license for runtime/\$100 per end user of app. | proprietary, USD99 |
| Technology Support | | | | |
| J2SE | yes | yes | yes | yes, but meant for JEE apps |
| J2EE | various plugins | yes | yes | yes |
| JSF | various plugins - MyEclipse, Exadel | no | yes | yes |
| JDO | plugins | no | no.. toplink only | no |
| Ant | optional | all builds | ? | all builds based on |

| | | | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|
| | | based on ant | | ant |
| Code Editor Features | | | | |
| Autocomplete | yes | yes | ? | yes |
| Hyperlink code | no | yes | ? | yes |
| WYSIWG HTML editor | plugins | no | yes | yes |
| WYSIWG JSP editor | plugins | no | yes | yes |
| WYSIWG JSF editor | plugins | no | yes | yes |
| CSS editor | ? | yes | ? | yes |
| XML editor | yes | yes | yes | yes |
| GUI Editor Features | | | | |
| GUI Editor | Visual Editor plugin | yes | yes | JSF only |
| Round-tripping | yes | no | ? | ? |
| Data binding | ? | no | ADF binding (JSR 227) | JSF only |
| Modelling Features | | | | |
| UML modelling | plugins, e.g. Omondo | no | yes | no |
| UML class round-tripping | yes, with Omondo | - | yes | - |
| Flowcharts | plugin (GFE) | no | ? | no |
| Tools | | | | |
| Profiler | ? | plugin | ? | no |
| Debugger | yes | yes | yes | yes |
| Database inspector | plugins | yes, read only | yes | yes, read/write |
| Subversion integration | plugin | generic SCM support | ? | generic |

I also looked at IBM's WSAD, Borland JBuilder and Sun Java Studio Enterprise, but they didn't make it into the table. The results above don't show any clear winner but my final evaluation comments were as follows (/me braces for a backlash from the Eclipse community):

My first impression of Eclipse is that it is a hackers tool. It seems to be a bit unstable and the large volume of plugins available makes it difficult to separate the wheat from the chaff.

Netbeans seems like a neat little package, although it seems to have a smaller user and developer base and probably lacks some of the features of Eclipse.

JDeveloper looks very useful, but has a scary licensing scheme. Sun's Java Studio Enterprise looks to be more than it's equal and has a sensible licensing scheme.

I'm going to go with Netbeans because its a no-nonsense product and provides a nice upgrade path to Studio Creator or Studio Enterprise if I decide I need the extra features.

So there you have it. I use Netbeans because it's neat and it's stable.

The story doesn't quite end there though. In the next episode, find out which of the world's problems Netbeans *hasn't* solved and find out if vim and I will ever get back together!

To be continued...

About Roger Keays



Roger Keays is an artist, an engineer, and a student of life. Since he left Australia in 2009, he has been living as a digital nomad in over 40 different countries around the world. Roger is addicted to surfing. His other interests are music, psychology, languages, and finding good food.